Journal of Contemporary Rituals and Traditions
Vol. 1, No. 1 (2023), 1-10
DOI: 10.15575/jcrt.220

When Tradition Meets Modernity: The Adaptation of Bajau Community in Malaysia Amidst Sociocultural Transformation

Mohd. Fadzil Zainuddin[1*]

[1] Sekolah Kebangsaan Pulau Mantanani, Kota Belud, Sabah, Malaysia; Email: xba5332@moe.edu.my

Received March 16, 2023; Accepted July 6, 2023; Published: July 13, 2023

Abstract

This research aims to analyze how the Bajau community in Kulambai Village, Kota Belud, Sabah, Malaysia, adapts their traditional practices in response to modernization. Modernization has brought significant changes in various aspects of life, including local culture and traditions. The Bajau community, having lived with local wisdom and distinctive traditions, now faces significant pressure to integrate with the ever-evolving modern world. This study utilizes a qualitative approach, collecting data through in-depth interviews with members of the Bajau community in Kulambai Village. Participatory observation is also conducted to understand how traditional practices interact with modern elements in daily life. The collected data are then analyzed to identify patterns and key findings related to traditional adaptation in the face of modernization. The research results indicate that the Bajau community in Kulambai Village is experiencing changes in their traditional practices in response to modernization. They face a dilemma between preserving their cultural identity and adapting to the social and economic changes brought by modernization. Factors such as education, urbanization, and media influence also affect this adaptation process. Resource limitations and challenges in maintaining local wisdom pose obstacles for the Bajau community. Nevertheless, efforts to preserve traditions and cultural values are continually made by some Bajau community groups. This research provides a deeper understanding of how the Bajau community in Kulambai Village adapts their traditional practices in the face of modernization. The results can make a significant contribution to efforts to preserve local culture and traditions amidst rapid social change. Recommendations for further research include expanding the scope of the study to Bajau communities in other regions and deepening the analysis of modernization's impact on their cultural aspects.

Keywords: Adaptation; Bajau community; Modernization; Traditional practices; Urbanization.

Introduction

Research on the cultural adaptation of traditional communities in the face of modernization holds significant value in the social context. The Bajau community in Kulambai Village, Sabah, exemplifies how traditional life confronts the challenges and changes brought about by modernization. According to Hendry (2017), the social and cultural changes resulting from modernization often have a significant impact on traditional societies. The ability of these communities to adapt to such changes frequently becomes a determining factor in the preservation of their culture and identity.

Various studies have been conducted on the adaptation of traditional societies to modernization, and the results of these studies can generally be grouped into three main categories. The first pertains to changes in social and economic structures. This group explains how modernization has a significant impact on the social and economic structures of traditional societies. For instance, a study by Kashyap (2004) shows that modernization has altered the work patterns and economic life of indigenous communities in India, leading to significant social changes in the family structure, functions, roles,

relationships, and status of its members. These changes have also affected their relationship with the kinship system. In response, the study formulated implications for counseling interventions aimed at meeting the changing needs of contemporary Indian families.

The second category of research pertains to changes in Culture and Traditions as a result of modernization. Modernization also has a significant impact on the culture and traditions of traditional societies. Busro and Qodim (2018) reported that in Cirebon, birth traditions have evolved over time in response to the influence of modernization and social changes. Another research highlights the increase in energy consumption, productivity, employment structure, and community participation in mass media, without abandoning the Chinese cultural identity. The relevance and challenges of maintaining this culture have been widely discussed in forums and seminars, attended by cultural experts to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of Chinese traditions in the context of modernization (Siu-lun, 1986; Xingwu, 1991).

The last category is Resistance and Cultural Preservation. Despite the changes, many studies also illustrate how traditional societies strive to maintain and preserve their culture and identity. Research by Qodim (2017) explores how the Agama Djawa Sunda (ADS) community has managed to uphold and preserve their beliefs and identities in the era of modernization, despite facing prohibitions from the state and discrimination from majority groups, through strategies such as adjusting to official religions, readjusting based on 'safe' situations, and transforming identity from religious beliefs to customs.

Although these studies have provided in-depth insights into the adaptation of traditional societies in the face of modernization, there is still a knowledge gap regarding how the Bajau community in Kulambai Village, Sabah, adapts their traditional practices in response to modernization. Therefore, this study aims to fill that knowledge gap.

The purpose of this research is to analyze how the Bajau community in Kulambai Village, Kota Belud, Sabah, Malaysia, adapts their traditional practices in the face of modernization challenges. In this context, modernization is defined as a series of social and economic changes that potentially alter the lifestyle, traditions, and culture of the Bajau community. Through a qualitative approach that includes in-depth interviews and participatory observations, this study aims to understand how the Bajau community maintains their cultural identity while adapting to the ever-changing modern world.

The benefits and contributions of this research include enhancing the understanding of the cultural adaptation process in the context of modernization. The results of this study can assist in formulating strategies and policies that promote the preservation of local cultures and traditions in the face of social and economic changes. Furthermore, these findings can provide valuable insights for the Bajau community and other indigenous communities who are striving to maintain and preserve their cultural identity and heritage in the modern era.

Research Method

The research method used in this study is a qualitative approach. According to Creswell (2013), the qualitative approach is used to explore and understand the meaning given by individuals or groups to a social or human problem. It allows researchers to obtain an in-depth and detailed picture of the phenomenon under study. For data collection, this study uses in-depth interview techniques and participatory observation. In-depth interviews are considered an effective method in exploring individual experiences and perceptions of their realities (Seidman, 2006).

Participatory observation is used as an additional method to understand how the

Bajau community in Kulambai Village interacts with modern elements in their daily lives. The use of participatory observation allows the researcher to be in the field, observing and participating in the daily lives of the research subjects (Kawulich, 2005). This provides the researcher with the opportunity to see directly how changes and adaptations occur in the context of the daily life of the Bajau community. The data obtained from the interviews and observations are then analyzed using content analysis to identify patterns and key findings (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

Results and Discussion

1. Overview of the Bajau Community in Kulambai Village

In this section, we present an overview of the Bajau community residing in Kulambai Village, Kota Belud, Sabah, Malaysia. The Bajau community is an indigenous ethnic group with a rich history and distinct culture. They are renowned for their seafaring skills, particularly in fishing, and for living in traditional stilt houses. The social structure of the Bajau community is still influenced by traditional kinship systems and hierarchies (Hussin & Khoso, 2017; Musa, Fozi, & Mohd, 2020; Stacey, Steenbergen, Clifton, & Acciaioli, 2018). The lives of the Bajau community in Kulambai Village revolve closely around the sea, with fishing, hunting, and gathering marine resources being their primary livelihoods (Osman, Yassin, Gabir, & Bakrin, 2021).

The Bajau community in Kulambai Village primarily speaks the Bajau Sama language (Mawi & Jusilin, 2017), although the majority of them are also proficient in Malay and English due to external influences (Stacey et al., 2018). Religion holds significant importance in the lives of the Bajau community, as the entire population in this village practices Islam. The daily lives of the Bajau community in this village revolve around the norms and values of their Islamic faith. To ensure the religious education of the younger generation, religious schools have been established in the village. In addition to formal and religious schools, non-formal education is also conducted, such as religious study sessions held in the mosque, led by trusted religious teachers and imams.

Figure 1 Village's oldest mosque

The oldest mosque in Kulambai Village, as shown in Figure 1, is meticulously maintained by periodically repainting and maintaining its internal structure. This mosque has been standing since before the Japanese colonial era in the Kota Belud area and

Kulambai Village. It serves as a place for religious study sessions, Quran recitation, religious schooling for children, and other religious teachings. Worship ceremonies, such as the "migang" ceremony, a gratitude ceremony marking the arrival of the holy month of Ramadan and the start of fasting for all villagers, are also conducted in this mosque. The migang ceremony is a longstanding cultural tradition that has been passed down through generations. During the migang ceremony, each household brings food to be shared among the participants, and a leader leads the recitation of tahlil and other prayers until the conclusion of the ceremony.

Abundant natural resources, such as the sea and forests, play an integral role in the Bajau community's way of life (Abu Bakar, 2020). Oral traditions, including traditional songs and folktales, hold significant importance in preserving their cultural identity (Zakharov, 2021). However, modernization and technological advancements pose significant challenges to the Bajau community in Kulambai Village, leading to changes that impact their way of life and cultural values.

2. Changes in Culture and Tradition due to Modernization

The influx of external culture and the shift from traditional to modern practices have significantly impacted the Bajau community's culture in Kulambai Village. The rejection of negative foreign influences on Bajau traditions can be observed in the phenomenon of marriage in the village. Previously, wedding ceremonies were celebrated with joy and followed traditional customs regarding food and respectful activities. However, currently, the influence of external culture has introduced the consumption of alcoholic beverages, especially among teenagers, which was previously non-existent. An interview with a resident of Kulambai Village, Azwee, confirms that this phenomenon has created negative perceptions of the village and religion, tarnishing the previously well-preserved positive image (Azwee, Personal Communication, Kupang, July 28, 2015).

In addition, gambling culture is also spreading among the community in Kulambai Village, which has a negative impact on the village's image, particularly in the eyes of visiting outsiders. The changing times have also diminished the practice of pure traditional characteristics such as playing traditional Bajau musical instruments and singing traditional songs. The younger generation lacks understanding and knowledge of many Bajau customs and cultural roots, such as the 'mulud' ceremony (Bajau poetry) and 'ngalai' (healing ritual for the sick), which were previously integral parts of village life. Interviews with residents of Kulambai Village also indicate that many traditional ceremonies have been forgotten, and this is one of the negative consequences of cultural change towards modernization (Azwee, Personal Communication, Kupang, July 28, 2015).

The negative impact of external culture is also evident in the Bajau language. The Bajau language, which used to be preserved with the use of original words, is now often mixed with other languages, such as Malay. This reflects the increasing influence of external culture, which poses a threat to the preservation of the Bajau tribe's native language and diminishes their cultural identity. Furthermore, the culture of dressing has also been influenced by the changing times. Some community members in the village choose to dress according to modern trends, which is sometimes perceived as immodest by the traditional society. The foreign dressing culture adopted by the villagers is another example of the negative impact of external culture on Bajau traditions in Kulambai Village.

3. Factors Affecting Traditional Adaptation

The process of traditional adaptation among the Bajau community in Kulambai Village is influenced by various interacting factors. Interviews with several members of the Bajau community revealed the main factors that influence changes in their traditional practices. One significant factor is education. With an increasing number of Bajau children attending school, opportunities are opened for them to access knowledge and information from the outside, which in turn can influence their perspectives and traditional values (Carneiro, 2000).

The influence of mass media and technology is also a significant factor in the traditional adaptation of the Bajau community. Observations indicate that access to television, the internet, and social media has opened up exposure to cultures and lifestyles from the outside, which can alter the preferences and behavior patterns of the Bajau community. This aligns with previous research stating that mass media plays a significant role in shaping opinions and cultural identities (Stevenson, 2020; Wasserman, 2005).

Furthermore, urbanization and the development of nearby cities also influence the traditional adaptation of the Bajau community. Many community members have migrated to cities in search of better employment and economic opportunities. As a result, their relationship with tradition and village life has changed. This process of urbanization can lead to changes in cultural values and more locally specific traditional practices (Colozza & Avendano, 2019).

However, it is important to recognize that despite the external factors that influence traditional adaptation, the Bajau community's desire to preserve their cultural identity also plays a vital role in this process. A quote from an interview with a Bajau elder, Ahmad (Personal Communication, July 28, 2015), captures his perspective: “Adaptation is a part of life, but we must also remember where we come from and who we are. We value modernization, but we also want to maintain the legacy of our ancestors. It is a part of our identity and what we bequeath to the next generation.”

4. Forms of Efforts in Maintaining Tradition

In their endeavor to preserve cultural heritage and traditions in Kulambai Village, the Bajau community has adopted various endeavors that center around the conservation and advancement of their cultural legacy. One such effort involves embracing traditional lifestyles, such as participating in communal mosque cleaning and upholding the tradition of 'nitik gandang' to honor the presence of the assembly in the mosque. Furthermore, educating the younger generation about Bajau customs and culture plays a pivotal role in safeguarding traditional knowledge. The youth are imparted with training and education on customs through communal gatherings and traditional competitions.

The use of the Bajau language is also actively promoted to ensure that their native language is not forgotten, as language is a key element of a nation's identity. The community of Kulambai Village also organizes various competitions that highlight the village's customs, such as grave poetry competitions, ngisi kalas (filling the water jar) competitions, and mulud (celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday) competitions. These competitions are held as a means of preserving and honoring the traditional customs they possess.

Furthermore, sillaturrahmi or social visits among villagers are also an important part of maintaining relationships and strengthening kinship among them. When there are kenduri (festive ceremonies) or other special events, the community visits and informs each other about the purpose of the event, as a way to enhance social connections and neighborly relations. All these efforts are aimed at preserving the local cultural values that

are inherent in the identity of Kulambai Village.

Collectively, these endeavors are crucial in ensuring that the valuable traditions of the Bajau people remain alive and are passed down from generation to generation. By practicing these forms of cultural preservation, the community of Kulambai Village is committed to preserving and appreciating their cultural heritage, allowing the identity and cultural wisdom of the Bajau people to thrive and endure in the face of ongoing modernization and social change.

5. Challenges and Opportunities in Tradition Preservation

In their efforts to preserve traditions, communities face challenges and risks, particularly for those who value their cultural wisdom. One factor that fuels the desire to maintain traditions is the change or loss of traditional characteristics in one's life, especially when individuals are influenced by modern culture, such as fashion, social relationships, and behaviors that are more Westernized.

The community in Kulambai Village, including the Bajau community, also faces challenges in preserving their traditions. One major challenge is the occurrence of negative interactions among fellow villagers. Some members of the community are reluctant to discuss traditions and tend to embrace new cultures that enter their lives, especially with technological advancements that make them feel less reliant on social interactions. This results in the loss of collective spirit and difficulties in gathering the community together.

In addition, the negative effects of globalization also contribute to conflicts among the different ethnic groups in the village. The influence of external lifestyles entering the community can trigger social jealousy and dissatisfaction, potentially leading to conflicts among residents. Among the various challenges faced, the issue of Westernization is also dominant in the community of Kulambai Village. Some individuals choose to live in a more modern way and disregard traditional values for various reasons, such as difficulties in accessing transportation and a lifestyle that prioritizes personal needs without considering the surrounding environment.

All of these challenges raise concerns among some members of the community in Kulambai Village, as they fear the risk of losing cultural values and the erosion of cultural diversity. The strengthening influence of Westernization makes it difficult to foster collective awareness within the community. These issues are of serious concern in the efforts to preserve and maintain the deeply-rooted traditions in the Bajau community of Kulambai Village.

However, despite the challenges faced in preserving traditions, there are also various opportunities that can be utilized to safeguard their cultural wisdom. First, innovative approaches to tradition preservation can present attractive opportunities. The Bajau community can adopt creative and innovative methods to impart their cultural values to the younger generation. For example, the use of information technology and social media can serve as effective means to disseminate information about their traditions and local wisdom. By harnessing digital platforms, Bajau traditions can be preserved and introduced to a wider audience, ensuring that the younger generation remains interested and connected to their cultural heritage.

Secondly, collaboration with cultural institutions and non-governmental organizations can provide greater support in tradition preservation. The Bajau community can establish partnerships with cultural institutions and organizations that are dedicated to the preservation of cultural heritage. With their assistance, the community can organize

educational programs and cultural activities that involve active participation from community members, especially the younger generation. This collaboration can also help raise community awareness about the importance of preserving and nurturing their traditions.

Thirdly, strengthening local cultural identity can be key in tradition preservation. The Bajau community needs to understand and value the significance of their own cultural identity. By proudly upholding their identity as Bajau people, they can overcome the negative influences of modernization and globalization. The drive to preserve traditions will be stronger when the community feels that their traditions are an integral part of their identity and self-identity as Bajau.

By leveraging these opportunities, the Bajau community in Kulambai Village can strive more diligently in preserving their traditions. Additionally, the active participation of all community members, including the younger generation, in safeguarding and nurturing their cultural heritage will be the key to success in preserving the continuity of Bajau traditions amidst the ongoing tide of modernization.

Conclusion

In this study, the researchers successfully analyzed how the Bajau community in Kulambai Village, Kota Belud, Sabah, Malaysia, adapted their traditional practices in response to modernization. The findings provide a comprehensive understanding of the changes experienced by the Bajau community in their efforts to preserve their cultural identity while integrating with the evolving modern world. The research results indicate that modernization has influenced various aspects of the Bajau community's lives, including their traditional practices. The adaptation process is influenced by factors such as education, urbanization, and the influence of mass media. Despite the challenges in preserving local wisdom, certain groups within the Bajau community continue to strive for the preservation of their traditions and cultural values. This research offers important insights into how the Bajau community confronts cultural changes in the face of modernization. In the context of cultural preservation and the safeguarding of traditional values, it is crucial for the government and other stakeholders to consider appropriate measures to protect this cultural heritage while allowing for sustainable social development. This study also contributes to the academic literature and is expected to stimulate further research on the impact of modernization on the Bajau community and other ethnic groups in the region.

There are several limitations to this study. Firstly, the research focuses solely on the Bajau community in Kulambai Village, Kota Belud, Sabah, Malaysia, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other Bajau communities or ethnic groups. Secondly, the qualitative approach employed in this study relies on a small sample size and may not capture the full range of perspectives within the community. Additionally, the research primarily relies on self-reported data from interviews and participatory observations, which may be subject to biases or inaccuracies. Furthermore, the study does not extensively explore the specific economic and social changes brought about by modernization in relation to the Bajau community. Future research should consider expanding the scope to include a more diverse range of Bajau communities and conducting quantitative analyses to complement the qualitative findings.

References

Abu Bakar, N. A. (2020). Balancing Protection and Community Development Through Institutional Arrangement in Tun Sakaran Marine Park, Sabah, Malaysia. In *Urban and Transit Planning* (pp. 469–476). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-17308-1_42

Busro, B., & Qodim, H. (2018). Perubahan Budaya dalam Ritual Slametan Kelahiran di Cirebon, Indonesia. *Jurnal Studi Agama Dan Masyarakat*, *14*(2), 127–147. https://doi.org/10.23971/jsam.v14i2.699

Carneiro, A. (2000). How does knowledge management influence innovation and competitiveness? *Journal of Knowledge Management*, *4*(2), 87–98. https://doi.org/10.1108/13673270010372242

Colozza, D., & Avendano, M. (2019). Urbanisation, dietary change and traditional food practices in Indonesia: A longitudinal analysis. *Social Science & Medicine*, *233*, 103–112. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2019.06.007

Creswell, J. (2013). *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*. LA: SAGE Publications.

Elo, S., & Kyngäs, H. (2008). The qualitative content analysis process. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, *62*(1), 107–115. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2007.04569.x

Hendry, J. (2017). *An introduction to social anthropology: sharing our worlds*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Hussin, H., & Khoso, A. (2017). Seaweed cultivation and coastal communities in Malaysia: An overview. *Asian Fisheries Science*, *30*(2), 87–100.

Kashyap, L. (2004). The Impact of Modernization on Indian Families: The Counselling Challenge. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling*, *26*(4), 341–350. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10447-004-0169-7

Kawulich, B. B. (2005). Participant observation as a data collection method. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *6*(2).

Mawi, D. ., & Jusilin, H. (2017). The Documentation of 'Selapa', Betel Leaf Eating Culture Equipment of Bajau Sama' Ethnic in Kota Belud. *MANU Jurnal Pusat Penataran Ilmu Dan Bahasa (PPIB)*, *26*, 185–210.

Musa, F., Fozi, N. M., & Mohd, D. D. (2020). Coastal communities' willingness to pay for mangrove ecotourism in Marudu Bay, Sabah, Malaysia. *Journal of Sustainability Science and Management*, *15*(4), 130–140.

Osman, N. F., Yassin, J., Gabir, J., & Bakrin, S. (2021). Impact of the climate change to the small-scale fisheries and their adaptation in Kota Belud, Sabah. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, *11*(6), 240–252.

Qodim, H. (2017). Strategi Bertahan Agama Djawa Sunda (ADS) Cigugur. *KALAM*, *11*(2), 329–364.

Seidman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Siu-lun, W. (1986). Modernization and Chinese Culture in Hong Kong. *The China Quarterly*, *106*, 306–325. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741000038595

Stacey, N., Steenbergen, D. J., Clifton, J., & Acciaioli, G. (2018). Understanding Social Wellbeing and Values of Small-Scale Fisheries amongst the Sama-Bajau of Archipelagic Southeast Asia. In *Social wellbeing and the values of small-scale fisheries* (pp. 97–123). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-60750-4_5

Stevenson, N. (2020). Media and cultural identity. In N. Stevenson (Ed.), *Routledge Handbook of Social and Cultural Theory* (pp. 325–340). London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315149714-20

Wasserman, H. (2005). Debating the media, shaping identity: postcolonial discourse and public criticism: communication, cultural and media studies. *Communicatio: South African Journal of Communication Theory and Research*, *31*(1), 49–60.

Xingwu, L. (1991). Tradition and Modernization: The Chinese Case. *Practicing Anthropology*, *13*(1), 22–27. https://doi.org/10.17730/praa.13.1.0t257kp1g060182n

Zakharov, A. O. (2021). Sea Nomads of Southeast Asia: From the Past to the Present ed. by Bérénice Bellina, Roger Blench and Jean-Christoph Galipaud (review). *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, *94*(2), 220–223. https://doi.org/10.1353/ras.2021.0039

© 2023 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

This page is intentionally left blank

Journal of Contemporary Rituals and Traditions
Vol. 1, No. 1 (2023), 11-16
DOI: 10.15575/jcrt.342

Resilient Tradition: The Resilience of Nyekar tradition Amidst the Covid-19 Changes

Aldi Rizky Pratama[1*]

[1] UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia; Email: aldirizkypratama14@gmail.com

Received May 11, 2023; Accepted July 16, 2023; Published: July 13, 2023

Abstract

The Nyekar tradition in Sirnaraga Public Cemetery, Bandung, has become an inseparable part of the local community's life. This research aims to understand the sustainability of the Nyekar tradition amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. The study was conducted by documenting and analyzing the Nyekar tradition, describing the condition of Sirnaraga Public Cemetery leading up to Ramadan, and investigating the adaptation of the Nyekar tradition during the Covid-19 pandemic. The research method used was qualitative with a field study approach. The findings show that the Nyekar tradition in Sirnaraga Public Cemetery has remained resilient during the pandemic, with the majority of participants continuing to practice the tradition as usual. This tradition has deep roots in religious, economic, social, and cultural aspects. The sustainability of the Nyekar tradition demonstrates the resilience and adaptation of the community in the face of changes brought about by the pandemic. This research provides a deeper understanding of the sustainability of the Nyekar tradition in Sirnaraga Public Cemetery amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. The implications of these findings can serve as a basis for preserving and promoting the sustainability of this important cultural tradition for the local community.

Keywords: Adaptation; Bajau community; Modernization; Traditional practices; Urbanization.

Introduction

The tradition of Nyekar or pilgrimage to graves holds strong social significance for the local community. This tradition is not only a moment to visit and care for the graves of ancestors but also an opportunity for family members scattered in various cities to gather and strengthen social bonds (Nurqo'id & Agus Machfud Fauzi, 2022). Furthermore, in another study conducted by Saputri (2021), it was found that the Nyekar tradition is considered as one of the cultural heritages that play a crucial role in maintaining the identity and togetherness of the local community (Saputri et al., 2021). This data illustrates the importance of the Nyekar tradition in the social and cultural context of the surrounding cemetery.

Several previous studies relevant to this research topic have been conducted. Previous research can be categorized into two categories. First, research that explores the Nyekar tradition in various locations and cultural contexts (Ayuningtyas, 2017; Wahid et al., 2018; Wulandari, 2021). This category documents the Nyekar tradition in specific areas with a focus on religious aspects and related cultural values. These studies provide a profound understanding of the importance of religious factors and cultural sustainability in preserving the Nyekar tradition. This includes aspects such as the role of tradition in strengthening social relationships (Maulana, 2015; Setiawan, 2016), maintaining cultural identity (Yuwono, 2016), as well as being a platform for interaction and sharing within the community (Mutmainnah, 2009).

Secondly, there is a category of research that investigates the adaptation of cultural

traditions during crises or social changes (Mufarida, 2021; Tradisi, 2022; Zainuri & Fitriani, 2021). Studies in this category examine the adaptation of cultural traditions during the pandemic, focusing on changes in the execution of traditions, the role of technology, and the resulting social impacts. These studies provide insights into how cultural traditions can adapt and endure in the face of significant changes.

From these two categories, it can be understood that previous research has made diverse contributions to understanding the Nyekar tradition and its adaptation during crises or social changes. However, this research will focus on the Nyekar tradition in Sirnaraga Public Cemetery, with the aim of providing a deeper understanding of the sustainability of this tradition in that location and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on its implementation.

The objective of this research is to identify and analyze the strategies used to maintain the Nyekar tradition during the Covid-19 pandemic. This study aims to gain a profound understanding of the efforts made by the community to preserve the continuity of the Nyekar tradition amidst the challenges faced during the pandemic. This research also aims to uncover the impact of the implemented strategies in sustaining this tradition.

Through these objectives, this research is expected to make a significant contribution to understanding the strategies employed to preserve the Nyekar tradition during the pandemic. The findings of this research are anticipated to provide valuable recommendations and guidance to support the preservation of cultural traditions during crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic.

Research Methods

This research was conducted at Sirnaraga Public Cemetery, a public cemetery located in a specific area. Sirnaraga Public Cemetery was chosen as the research location because it has a rich and diverse Nyekar tradition. Additionally, Sirnaraga Public Cemetery is also a primary destination for the surrounding community during the Ramadan period. The strong presence of the Nyekar tradition at Sirnaraga Public Cemetery makes this location highly relevant for understanding and documenting the tradition in-depth.

The research participants consisted of individuals and groups involved in the Nyekar tradition at Sirnaraga Public Cemetery. Participant sampling was conducted using purposive sampling techniques. Participants were selected based on criteria relevant to the research objectives, such as age, gender, and role in the implementation of the Nyekar tradition. Therefore, the participants involved in this research have a profound understanding of the Nyekar tradition and can provide valuable insights in describing the tradition and its adaptation during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Data collection was carried out through several techniques, including participant observation, interviews, and visual documentation. Participant observation was conducted by actively participating in the Nyekar tradition, allowing the researcher to directly observe the activities conducted by the participants, take notes on experiences and interactions, and gain a deep understanding of the tradition's context. Interviews were conducted with participants who had a profound understanding of the Nyekar tradition, such as community leaders or family members actively involved in the tradition. These interviews provided a space for participants to share their perspectives, experiences, and understanding of the Nyekar tradition. Additionally, visual documentation in the form of photos and videos was also conducted to visually document the implementation of the Nyekar tradition and provide concrete evidence in the research data analysis.

Results and Discussion

1. What is the Nyekar Tradition?

The term "Nyekar" originates from the Javanese word "sekar," which means flowers. Nyekar, in its terminology, refers to the act of scattering flowers when visiting someone's grave. Nyekar itself has existed for a long time and is not necessarily performed before Ramadan. Visiting graves can be done at any time as a way to remember death. In fact, the Prophet said that the best way to increase faith is through visiting graves or remembering death.

The Nyekar tradition is born from the cultural acculturation of Islam and Javanese beliefs. In Javanese belief, spirits are eternal and always "return" to visit their families every month of "Ruwah" (in the Islamic calendar known as Sha'ban). Ruwah comes from the word "Arwah," the plural form of "Ruh," which means spirit. The Javanese people in the past believed that at the end of Sha'ban, the spirits of the deceased would return to the world to visit their families. Therefore, that month is considered a good month for pilgrimage before Ramadan.

The Nyekar tradition is usually performed before the month of Ramadan and also on the day of Eid al-Fitr, specifically after the Eid prayer. However, it is important to note certain aspects of visiting graves to avoid religious violations. In this tradition, it is sufficient to greet and pray for the deceased by reciting Surah Al-Fatihah. However, people often scatter flowers and sprinkle water on the graves.

According to M. Salim in his writing, the Nyekar tradition is mentioned in a hadith where the Prophet allowed or encouraged his followers to visit graves and pray for the deceased, which would bring rewards for both the one reciting and the one being recited for, reminding them of death. Therefore, Nyekar graves are recommended by the Prophet Muhammad, and praying for the deceased is also a command from Allah to remember death (Jamhari, 2000).

According to Prima and Maharani in their paper titled "The Tradition of Ziarah Kubro in the Community of Palembang City from the Perspective of Max Scheler's Hierarchy of Values," it is mentioned that the tradition of Ziarah Kubro is performed before the month of Ramadan, specifically during the last 10 days of the month of Syakban, which is 10 days before Ramadan. Until now, the tradition of Ziarah Kubro has remained intact (Prima & Maharani, 2018).

2. Nyekar tradition at Sirnaraga Public Cemetery during the Covid-19 Pandemic

The pandemic itself is an epidemic that has spread to various continents and countries, generally affecting many people. An epidemic is a term used to describe a sudden increase in the number of disease cases in a specific population area. The impact of this pandemic is not only limited to small aspects of life but also extends to larger aspects. Indeed, all countries around the world have experienced its effects.

Despite the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, it did not bring the Nyekar tradition to a complete halt. This tradition is not only about religious matters but also encompasses economic, social, and cultural aspects. The strong cultural element keeps this tradition running smoothly.

Unlike the previous year when Sirnaraga Public Cemetery was closed to visitors for grave pilgrimage, this year, due to the decrease in Covid-19 spread in Indonesia, the government reopened the cemetery for visitors to perform their grave visits. This research

is based on my personal experience as a visitor to Sirnaraga Public Cemetery, starting from before the pandemic until now. Thus, I am able to explain the differences or changes in the Nyekar tradition that occurred before and after the pandemic. It can be said that there have been several changes in the implementation of the Nyekar tradition at Sirnaraga Public Cemetery over the years.

These changes can be observed in terms of habits, such as the obligation to comply with the government's "new normal" policy, which requires people to adopt new habits when engaging in activities, especially in public places like visiting Sirnaraga Public Cemetery. One of the new habits is wearing a mask when in public. Additionally, there are changes in the aspect of communication space. Previously, communication could be conducted without spatial limitations, but now there are limitations in terms of maintaining distance to prevent the spread of Covid-19, according to the government's social distancing program. It is not only limited to physical distance but also to the duration of face-to-face communication.

Despite these aforementioned changes, the Nyekar tradition at Sirnaraga Public Cemetery still continues as usual, without any changes in the traditional implementation. Typically, the Nyekar tradition at Sirnaraga Public Cemetery in Bandung is performed in the days leading up to Ramadan and after Ramadan. The ritual process remains the same, with prayers for the deceased recited at their graves, including recitations from the Quran. Afterward, flowers are scattered and water is poured directly onto the graves.

3. Sustaining the Nyekar Tradition at Sirnaraga Public Cemetery during the Pandemic

The Nyekar tradition at Sirnaraga Public Cemetery in Bandung has demonstrated its strong resilience despite social changes and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The research findings indicate that this tradition has not undergone significant changes during the pandemic, with the majority of participants continuing to practice the tradition as usual. This highlights the resilience and adaptation of the community in the face of pandemic-induced changes. These findings are consistent with previous research emphasizing the potential high sustainability of cultural traditions, particularly when they have strong roots in religious, economic, social, and cultural aspects.

The Nyekar tradition at Sirnaraga Public Cemetery is supported by important factors that contribute to its sustainability. From a religious perspective, this tradition holds deep spiritual meaning and value for the local community. Participants believe that visiting and tending to the graves of their ancestors is an obligation as an act of respect and devotion. The economic aspect also plays a significant role, as the tradition provides economic opportunities for local traders who offer products and services during the practice of the tradition. Socially, the Nyekar tradition serves as an important moment to strengthen social bonds among family members and the community. It brings together extended family members to share, gather, and commemorate their ancestors. Moreover, culturally, the Nyekar tradition at Sirnaraga Public Cemetery has become an inseparable part of the local cultural identity, preserving a heritage that has been passed down through generations.

This research provides a deeper understanding of the sustainability of the Nyekar tradition at Sirnaraga Public Cemetery amid the Covid-19 pandemic. These findings support previous research that emphasizes the importance of religious, economic, social, and cultural factors in maintaining cultural traditions. The implications of these findings can be used as a basis for preserving and promoting the sustainability of the Nyekar

tradition at Sirnaraga Public Cemetery and strengthening efforts to preserve and promote important cultural traditions for the local community.

The Nyekar tradition at Sirnaraga Public Cemetery has persisted despite the Covid-19 pandemic, showcasing the resilience and adaptation of the community in the face of significant changes during this global crisis. Several factors may explain the sustainability of this tradition during the pandemic.

Firstly, the Nyekar tradition has strong roots in religious aspects. For those who practice this tradition, Nyekar is not just a visit to ancestral graves but also an act of devotion to God and a form of respect for the spirits of ancestors. The religious aspect inherent in this tradition provides a strong motivation for people to continue practicing Nyekar despite the limitations and risks brought about by the pandemic.

Additionally, the Nyekar tradition has strong social and cultural values. It serves as a gathering moment for extended families, relatives, and the local community. Despite the restrictions and health protocols that need to be followed during the pandemic, people still strive to maintain the social and cultural essence of the Nyekar tradition. They can use technology such as video calls or social media to stay connected and share experiences with family and relatives who cannot be physically present. In this way, the social and cultural values of the Nyekar tradition are preserved and adapted to the existing conditions.

The sustainability of the Nyekar tradition during the Covid-19 pandemic demonstrates a high level of resilience and togetherness within the community. Despite the significant changes brought about by the pandemic in daily life, cultural traditions like Nyekar remain an important part of the community's identity and life. In challenging situations like a pandemic, cultural traditions can provide the stability, continuity, and sense of togetherness needed by the community to face shared challenges.

Conclusion

The Nyekar tradition at Sirnaraga Cemetery in Bandung has persisted strongly despite the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The majority of participants have continued to practice the tradition with strong sustainability, demonstrating the resilience and adaptation of the community in response to the changes brought about by the pandemic. Factors such as religion, social, and cultural aspects play a crucial role in maintaining the continuity of this tradition. The Nyekar tradition at Sirnaraga Cemetery has deep roots in religious aspects, with visiting ancestral graves seen as a spiritual obligation and a form of respect for ancestors. Additionally, the social and cultural aspects foster togetherness and preserve the values of the tradition through the gathering of extended families and the local community. Although adaptations in the implementation of the tradition may occur, Nyekar remains an important part of the community's identity and life, providing stability and continuity amidst challenging circumstances.

As a qualitative study with a fieldwork approach, this research has several limitations. First, caution must be exercised when generalizing the findings as the research was conducted in a specific location, namely Sirnaraga Public Cemetery in Bandung, and the results may not directly apply to Nyekar traditions in other locations. Furthermore, the use of purposive sampling may impact the representativeness of the participants involved in this research. Additionally, this study is limited to the perspectives of Nyekar tradition practitioners and may not fully capture the viewpoints of other stakeholders involved in the tradition, such as local authorities or the surrounding community of Sirnaraga Public Cemetery. Therefore, further research with a broader scope is needed to

obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the Nyekar tradition and its adaptations during the Covid-19 pandemic.

References

Ayuningtyas, T. R. (2017). Tradisi Selametan di Makam Kyai Mas Kecamatan Prajekan Kabupaten Bondowoso. *Jurnal Sriwijaya Historia*, *1*(1), 56–65.

Jamhari. (2000). Ziarah Tradition of Java. *Studia Islamika*, *7*(1), 51.

Maulana, C. (2015). Ritual "Nyekar", Cultural Capital, dan Mobilitas Politik di Indramayu. *IN RIGHT: Jurnal Agama Dan Hak Azazi Manusia*, *4*(2).

Mufarida, L. (2021). *Konstruksi Sosial Tradisi Ziarah Kubur Pada Masa Pandemi Covid-19 Di Makam Syekh Wasil Syamsudin Kota Kediri*. IAIN Kediri.

Mutmainnah. (2009). *Interaksi Sosial Masyarakat Desa Kauman Dengan Masyarakat Pendatang Dalam Tradisi Ziarah Di Makam Sunan Kudus*. UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta.

Nurqo'id, F. I., & Agus Machfud Fauzi. (2022). Fungsi Sosial Sedekah Bumi Di Desa Bongso Kulon, Gresik. *Jurnal Penelitian Agama*, *23*(1), 147–158. https://doi.org/10.24090/jpa.v23i1.2022.pp147-158

Prima, A., & Maharani, S. D. (2018). Tradisi Ziarah Kubro Masyarakat Kota Palembang dalam Perspektif Hierarki Nilai Max Scheler. *Jurnal Filsafat*, *28*(2), 160–179.

Saputri, R. M., Rinenggo, A., & Suharno, S. (2021). Eksistensi Tradisi Nyadran Sebagai Penguatan Identitas Nasional di Tengah Modernisasi. *Civics Education And Social Science Journal*, *3*(2), 99. https://doi.org/10.32585/cessj.v3i2.2080

Setiawan, B. (2016). Tradisi ziarah kubur: agama sebagai konstruksi sosial pada masyarakat di Bawean, Kabupaten Gresik. *Biokultur*, *5*(2), 247–261.

Tradisi, B. (2022). Tradisi Sosial Keagamaan Masyarakat Pulau Bengkalis Dalam Memeriahkan Ramadhan Dan Idul Fitri. *Jurnal Matlamat Minda*, *2*(1).

Wahid, A. N., Sumarlam, ., & Subiyantoro, S. (2018). Tradisi Ziarah Makam Bathara Katong (Tinjauan Deskripsi Akulturasi Budaya). *Mudra Jurnal Seni Budaya*, *33*(2), 215–222. https://doi.org/10.31091/mudra.v33i2.289

Wulandari, A. R. (2021). Tradisi Nyekar Di Magetan Perspektif Islam. *Inovatif: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Agama Dan Kebudayaan*, 64–145.

Yuwono, E. S. (2016). Kejawaan Dan Kekristenan: Negosiasi Identitas Orang Kristen Jawa Dalam Persoalan Di Sekitar Tradisi Ziarah Kubur. *Humanika*, *16*(1), 93–113. https://doi.org/10.21831/hum.v16i1.12139

Zainuri, A., & Fitriani, F. (2021). Era Baru dalam Ritual Keagamaan: Studi Ziarah Kubur di Masa Pandemi Covid-19: Studi Ziarah Kubur Di Masa Pandemi Covid-19. *Tsaqofah*, *19*(02), 149–165.

© 2023 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

Journal of Contemporary Rituals and Traditions
Vol. 1, No. 1 (2023), 17-24
DOI: 10.15575/jcrt.317

Transforming Traditions: Exploring the Adaptation of Nganteuran Tradition during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Irma Mulya Hidayah[1*]

[1] UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia; Email: rmamulya23@yahoo.com

Received January 28, 2023; Accepted June 14, 2023; Published: July 14, 2023

Abstract

This study examines the changes in the Nganteuran tradition during the COVID-19 pandemic in Cianjur Regency. Using a qualitative approach, in-depth interviews were conducted with purposively selected participants. The findings reveal a decline in community participation in the tradition due to physical limitations and concerns about virus transmission. Instead of physical visits, individuals opted for exchanging greetings through text messages or phone calls. Adjustments were made in the execution of the tradition, including reducing the number of visited houses, prioritizing visits to immediate family members, or organizing virtual Nganteuran events via video conferencing platforms. The pandemic also influenced the perception and attitudes of the community, with emerging concerns and caution in participating. However, despite the challenges, the Nganteuran tradition persisted with adaptations made by the community. This research provides insights into how local traditions adapt to unforeseen changes, emphasizing the importance of reconfiguring social relationships in the context of a pandemic.

Keywords: Nganteuran Tradition; COVID-19 Pandemic; Change; Adaptation.

Introduction

Traditions and culture play a crucial role in preserving the identity and togetherness of a community (Cahya & Purnama, 2022). One distinctive tradition in Cianjur Regency, Indonesia, is Nganteuran. Nganteuran is a social practice carried out before the celebration of Eid al-Fitr, where neighbors visit each other to exchange greetings and strengthen social bonds. However, in recent years, this tradition has undergone significant changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic that has affected the world.

Since the emergence of the pandemic, health guidelines and social restrictions have changed the way we live and interact (Akerlof, 1997; Baker, Martí, Braunstein, Whitehead, & Yukich, 2020; Kotus, Rzeszewski, & Olejniczak, 2022). Cultural traditions like Nganteuran have not escaped the impact of these changes. Cianjur Regency, which possesses unique cultural richness (Stuono & Meitasari, 2021), has also undergone adaptations to ensure safety and cleanliness in the implementation of the Nganteuran tradition.

One tradition that is familiar to Sundanese people, especially in the Cianjur region, is the Nganteuran tradition, which is commonly practiced before the celebrations of Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha. The Nganteuran tradition is generally understood as the custom of exchanging or giving food, such as traditional dishes and Eid-specific cakes, to relatives, neighbors, and those in need in the surrounding area during the night before the festive day. The word “Nganteuran” itself is derived from the Sundanese language, meaning “to deliver”. The activities in the Nganteuran tradition fall into the category of sharing, as people give to others with the aim of complementing one another’s joy during the festive season. Moreover, the implementation of this tradition is also expected to

strengthen the bonds of kinship and social ties within the community. The Nganteuran tradition has created many positive impacts, making it a key factor in the harmony of Sundanese society, particularly in Cianjur Regency.

Previous studies have examined the impact of changing traditions and cultures during difficult crises or social transformations (Misra & Stokols, 2012; Scholte et al., 2020). However, research specifically exploring the changes in the Nganteuran tradition before Eid al-Fitr in Cianjur Regency during the pandemic is still limited. In this context, this study aims to fill the knowledge gap and contribute to understanding the changes in this tradition during the COVID-19 pandemic situation.

Several studies have shown that local traditions and cultures can undergo transformation and adaptation in response to social changes or crisis situations (Dosmaroha, Widiasari, & Pahlawan, 2020; Wardhana & Farokhah, 2021; Wibisono, Truna, & Rahman, 2021). In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, local traditions like Nganteuran have undergone adjustments to comply with social restrictions and minimize the risk of virus transmission. Although there have been studies observing the adaptation of traditions and cultures in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is no specific research that addresses the changes that have occurred in the Nganteuran tradition before Eid al-Fitr in Cianjur Regency. Therefore, this study aims to fill this knowledge gap by focusing on the changes in the implementation of the Nganteuran tradition during the COVID-19 pandemic in Cianjur Regency.

By analyzing the adaptation of the Cianjur community to the pandemic in the context of the Nganteuran tradition, this research is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the social and cultural dynamics in Cianjur Regency during the pandemic period. The results of this study will contribute to the field of cultural studies and provide insights for policies and strategies in preserving and promoting the sustainability of local traditions in the future.

Research Methodology

This research focuses on the changes in the Nganteuran tradition before Eid al-Fitr in Cianjur Regency during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Nganteuran tradition is a social practice that involves neighbors visiting each other to exchange greetings before the Eid celebration. This study will analyze how this tradition has changed in terms of implementation, community participation, and public perception during the pandemic situation.

This research adopts a qualitative approach with data collection methods including in-depth interviews and direct observations. Respondents for the interviews are purposively selected, considering diversity in age, gender, social background, and experience in the Nganteuran tradition. The interviews are conducted using a pre-designed interview guide. Additionally, direct observations are carried out to observe the implementation of the Nganteuran tradition while adhering to health protocols. The collected data will be analyzed using thematic analysis techniques to identify the main themes and sub-themes that emerge from the interviews and observations. The validity of the research will be ensured through data triangulation, and the research report will adhere to ethical research principles.

Results and Discussion

1. Nganteuran Tradition in Cianjur Regency

Indonesia is a country rich in cultural diversity, including different traditions and customs in each region. One well-known tradition is the Javanese tradition, particularly in West Java (Indrawardana, 2013). The Sundanese community, known for their strong tradition of maintaining social ties and creating harmony, highly values the cultural and religious values passed down from their ancestors (Miharja, 2015). In Cianjur Regency, West Java, there are many local cultural practices that serve as the identity and pride of the local community, such as the Nganteuran tradition, Ngarak Posong, Rengkong art, Kuda Kosong art, Cianjuran songs, and maenpo or martial arts (Cimande, Cikalong, and Syabandar styles) (Risman, Wibhawa, & Fedryansyah, 2016). Although recognized as local wisdom and cultural pillars, there are still local communities that are not fully familiar with and appreciative of these cultural practices (Ningsih & Erdlanda, 2019). The cultural diversity in Indonesia is attractive to tourists, allowing them to explore differences and similarities with other cultures (Risman et al., 2016).

The Nganteuran tradition is a long-standing tradition practiced by the Sundanese community in Cianjur Regency before the celebrations of Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha. In this tradition, people deliver traditional Eid foods from door to door as a way of sharing happiness. The food includes various types of cakes, white rice, ketupat (rice cake), opor (coconut milk-based dish), rendang (spicy meat dish), and others. This tradition holds deep meaning in strengthening kinship ties, complementing each other, sharing blessings, and promoting brotherhood. However, this tradition has declined in some areas of Cianjur, especially in urban areas, due to factors such as new arrivals, changing times, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic that has limited Eid celebrations.

The Nganteuran tradition has become an important part of celebrating victories and is deeply ingrained in the Islamic community in Cianjur. To preserve the authenticity of this tradition, preservation efforts are needed, especially during the pandemic, to ensure that the tradition is not lost. Preserving and developing traditions in a region is crucial because traditions are an integral part of community life. Humans play a significant role in developing culture and traditions. Their influence brings changes to culture and traditions (Widyanti, 2015). It is important to avoid the extinction of traditions and culture. Preserving cultural heritage requires awareness and commitment from various parties. Essentially, in the development of traditions, human encouragement towards culture is essential, with an active attitude and creativity. Local traditions and wisdom in a culture are not variables that can stand alone. Preserving and securing their future is influenced by various interconnected factors such as geography, politics, economy, history, behaviors, and government policies that significantly impact culture (Utina, 2012). The Nganteuran tradition is one of the local wisdoms that deserve to be preserved. This tradition has the potential to develop as a meaningful cultural heritage. Despite the spread of globalization, it is important to preserve local culture as the identity of the region itself. Local culture should not be uprooted from the cultural heritage passed down from our ancestors in the face of homogenization tendencies resulting from globalization (Brata Ida Bagus, 2016). Understanding the meaning behind the cultural traditions of a region is expected to foster love, pride, and a sense of belonging among the community towards their local wisdom (Ningsih & Erdlanda, 2019).

2. The Impact of the Pandemic on the Nganteuran Tradition

The emergence of the coronavirus pandemic in 2019, originating from China, quickly spread throughout the world, including Indonesia. The pandemic, which has been ongoing for several years, has not only affected public health but also various aspects of life. The pandemic has caused many changes in social, cultural, economic, and educational aspects in various countries. Among the many negative impacts caused by the pandemic, the most palpable one is the social changes in communities, which affect people's behavior, attitudes, and mindset towards social values (Muara, Prasetyo, & Rahmat, 2021). Governments have implemented various measures to break the chain of pandemic transmission, including policies that enforce social restrictions in communities. These policies have inevitably led to a decrease in interactions and connectivity within communities, resulting in the fading of culture and traditions (Nasution, Erlina, & Muda, 2020). Particularly for Muslims during Eid celebrations amidst the pandemic, the experience has been significantly different from previous years as many cultural and traditional aspects of the festivities have been limited according to government guidelines, prioritizing safety and health. One of the traditions affected by the pandemic is the Nganteuran tradition, which is a long-standing tradition in Cianjur Regency. The tradition of visiting and sharing traditional Eid foods with the community has now diminished. Furthermore, the pandemic has also impacted the local economy, resulting in negative effects on the financial situation of the community.

In 2020, the number of impoverished families in Cianjur Regency reached 200 thousand households, primarily due to the pandemic. This is particularly significant as Cianjur is one of the districts in West Java Province known for its tourism potential in its rural areas. According to data from the local tourism office, there are nine villages in Cianjur Regency that offer alternative tourism experiences, showcasing their respective local cultural heritage (Risman et al., 2016). In addition to farming, a significant portion of the community in Cianjur is engaged in trading and works in various tourist destinations. The pandemic has led to a decrease in visitor numbers to the tourism sites in Cianjur, which has an adverse impact on the local economy. Many accommodations and hotels have reduced their staff due to the lack of visitors. The economic downturn in Cianjur has made it challenging for the community to develop and sustain their culture and traditions. As a result, many people have reduced the implementation of traditions, including in the celebration of special occasions like Eid, with the Nganteuran tradition being one of those affected. The economic factor has led to a less elaborate menu being served during the Nganteuran tradition. With the COVID-19 pandemic, people face difficulties in economic factors, and they also feel anxious about performing such traditions, resulting in a decline in the Nganteuran tradition in several regions. However, in some areas, such as Kampung Awilarangan, Benjot Village, Cugenang District, Cianjur Regency, the local community continues to strive to maintain the existence of this Eid tradition by replacing traditional Eid foods with packaged meals such as staple food packages, syrup cookies, and more. This is done with the hope that this meaningful tradition, passed down through generations, will continue to live on and be preserved so that its philosophical essence and positive impacts can be experienced by future generations. With such conditions, people's daily activities are disrupted, especially with the fading of many traditions. Many people have shifted their culture virtually, using digital platforms (Nasution et al., 2020).

The diverse traditions and local wisdom in Indonesia represent the culture and traditions of the various islands in the archipelago, playing a significant role in the

development of national culture in Indonesia. In the era of technological advancements and the pandemic, efforts should be made to preserve and develop traditions and culture. With easy access to various media, Indonesian culture can be effectively showcased to a wider audience. However, it seems that many individuals in Indonesian society lack confidence in their own culture during this era of globalization and the pandemic. They tend to imitate foreign lifestyles and sometimes take more pride in foreign cultures rather than their own. Consequently, even in culinary aspects, Indonesian society tends to prefer foreign cuisine over traditional Indonesian dishes made with local spices (Rahmawaty & Maharani, 2013). This affects the existence of authentic Indonesian products, making them less popular in Indonesia. This significantly impacts the existence of local cultural heritage and can lead to a decline in the local economy, especially during the pandemic, and a lack of a sense of ownership towards our current local wisdom. To avoid this, a change in mindset is needed from each individual to better preserve and maintain the culture of our nation (Risman et al., 2016). During the pandemic, the meaning embedded within the Nganteuran tradition should be applied in daily life and serve as an example of community living, especially during this challenging time. It emphasizes the values of mutual assistance, complementing each other's shortcomings, and working together to experience happiness collectively. Local wisdom can sustain itself in a region, usually being passed down through generations.

3. Adaptation of the Nganteuran Tradition Amidst the Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced the community in Cianjur Regency to make new adjustments in the implementation of the Nganteuran tradition. Social restrictions and health protocols implemented by the government have affected the way this tradition is carried out. One noticeable change is the decrease in physical visits to neighbors' houses during Eid celebrations. As a precautionary measure, the people of Cianjur now prefer to send Eid dishes through courier services or deliveries. An interview with one of the participants involved in the Nganteuran tradition, Mr. SJ, revealed, "Since this pandemic, we have to be cautious and mindful of our health. We no longer make physical visits to our neighbors' homes. We prefer to send Eid dishes through courier services or deliveries."

Furthermore, in previous research conducted by Ningsih and Cysbya Erdlanda (Ningsih & Erdlanda, 2019), it was found that many people in Cianjur still have not fully understood and appreciated local wisdom and traditions such as Nganteuran. However, with the pandemic, adjustments in the implementation of this tradition have become important in ensuring the safety and health of the community. Although the tradition is no longer carried out directly, efforts to continue the tradition through safe food delivery can strengthen the values of brotherhood and complementing each other's happiness within the community.

In addition to changes in food sharing, social interactions have also undergone significant shifts. In the Nganteuran tradition before the pandemic, the people of Cianjur would gather at their neighbors' homes, engage in conversations, and celebrate Eid together. However, with social restrictions in place, face-to-face gatherings are no longer possible. As an alternative, the community has embraced the use of technology and virtual communication to stay connected and share Eid moments.

To maintain social relationships and celebrate the Nganteuran tradition amidst the pandemic, the people of Cianjur have utilized technology and virtual communication. Another participant in this research, Mrs. RT, stated, "We use messaging apps and video

calls to stay connected with family and neighbors during Eid. We exchange greetings and stories through messaging services and even hold Nganteuran events online through video calls."

Through messaging apps, video calls, and social media, the people of Cianjur can continue to communicate with family, neighbors, and loved ones. They can exchange Eid greetings, share stories, and even engage in collective prayers virtually. The utilization of technology allows the community to still experience togetherness and maintain social connections, even without meeting in person.

Additionally, the use of technology and virtual communication enables the people of Cianjur to hold Nganteuran events online. They can share experiences, stories, and exchange traditional Eid dishes through video calls or social media. Although not the same as physical traditions, these efforts allow the community to still feel the warmth of social relationships and togetherness in celebrating Eid.

This aligns with previous research conducted by Muzakki (2020), which shows that the pandemic has affected the moments and warmth of celebrating sacred days such as Eid. However, with the utilization of technology and virtual communication, people can still experience togetherness in the Nganteuran tradition. This technology provides a new alternative for communication, sharing experiences, and exchanging traditional Eid dishes through video conferencing platforms or social media.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research demonstrates that the COVID-19 pandemic has prompted the community in Cianjur Regency to make adaptations in the Nganteuran tradition. Social restrictions and health protocols have influenced the way this tradition is carried out, but the community has found solutions by sending Eid dishes through courier services and utilizing virtual communication technology to maintain social connections. Despite undergoing changes, the Nganteuran tradition continues to uphold the values of brotherhood and togetherness in celebrating Eid amidst unusual circumstances. In a broader context, this research provides insights into the adaptation of local culture in facing global crises and emphasizes the importance of support and active participation in preserving and developing these traditions for the future.

This research has some limitations to consider, including the limited focus on Cianjur Regency and a small number of participants in the qualitative approach. Additionally, the research was conducted during a specific period of the pandemic, so changes in the Nganteuran tradition may continue to evolve over time. Nevertheless, this research provides valuable initial understanding of the adaptation of the Nganteuran tradition amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and can serve as a basis for further research and the development of more effective strategies in preserving and reviving local traditions in unusual situations.

References

Akerlof, G. A. (1997). Social Distance and Social Decisions. *Econometrica*, *65*(5), 1005. https://doi.org/10.2307/2171877

Baker, J. O., Martí, G., Braunstein, R., Whitehead, A. L., & Yukich, G. (2020). Religion in the Age of Social Distancing: How COVID-19 Presents New Directions for Research. *Sociology of Religion*, *81*(4), 357–370. https://doi.org/10.1093/socrel/sraa039

Brata Ida Bagus. (2016). Kearifan BudayaLokal Perekat Identitas Bangsa. *Jurnal Bakti*

Saraswati. Diakses Pada Hari Minggu 20 Juli 2019. Pukul 00.00 WIB. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11104-008-9614-4

Cahya, E. N., & Purnama, S. (2022). Mempertahankan Identitas Lokal Di Era Globalisasi Melalui Sanggar Seni Bougenville. *Jurnal Borneo Akcaya*, *8*(2), 112–126.

Dosmaroha, A. Y., Widiasari, S., & Pahlawan, A. A. (2020). Perkembangan Tradisi Saparan di Desa Ngrawan Saat Pandemi Covid-19. *Jurnal Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana Salatiga*, *2*(1), 87–94.

Indrawardana, I. (2013). Kearifan Lokal Adat Masyarakat Sunda Dalam Hubungan Dengan Lingkungan Alam. *Komunitas: International Journal of Indonesian Society and Culture*, *4*(1), 1–8. https://doi.org/10.15294/komunitas.v4i1.2390

Kotus, J., Rzeszewski, M., & Olejniczak, A. (2022). Material and digital dimensions of urban public spaces through the lens of social distancing. *Cities*, *130*, 103856. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2022.103856

Miharja, D. (2015). Sistem Kepercayaan Awal Masyarakat Sunda. *Al-Adyan : Jurnal Studi Lintas Agama*, *10*(1), 19–36.

Muara, T., Prasetyo, T. B., & Rahmat, H. K. (2021). Psikologi Masyarakat Indonesia Di Tengah Pandemi: Sebuah Studi Analisis Kondisi Psikologis Menghadapi Covid-19 Perspektif Comfort Zone Theory. *Ristekdik : Jurnal Bimbingan Dan Konseling*, *6*(1), 69. https://doi.org/10.31604/ristekdik.2021.v6i1.69-77

Muzakki, A. (2020). Lebaran di Tengah Pandemi Covid-19. In *Lebaran di Tengah Pandemi Covid-19*.

Nasution, D. A. D., Erlina, E., & Muda, I. (2020). Dampak Pandemi COVID-19 terhadap Perekonomian Indonesia. *Jurnal Benefita*, *5*(2), 212. https://doi.org/10.22216/jbe.v5i2.5313

Ningsih, D. N., & Erdlanda, F. M. C. (2019). Nilai pendidikan dalam kesenian rengkong di Cianjur Jawa Barat: Kajian etnopedagogi. *Jurnal Ilmiah Bina Edukasi*, *11*(01). https://doi.org/10.33557/jedukasi.v11i01.201

Rahmawaty, U., & Maharani, Y. (2013). Pelestarian Budaya Indonesia Melalui Pembangunan Fasilitas Pusat Jajanan Tradisional Jawa Barat. *Interior Design*, *2*(1).

Risman, A., Wibhawa, B., & Fedryansyah, M. (2016). Kontribusi Pariwisata Terhadap Peningkatan Kesejahteraan Masyarakat Indonesia. *Prosiding Penelitian Dan Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat*. https://doi.org/10.24198/jppm.v3i1.13622

Stuono, S., & Meitasari, K. (2021). Sistem Informasi Objek Wisata Di Kabupaten Cianjur Berbasis Media Sosial. *Media Jurnal Informatika*, *13*(1), 26. https://doi.org/10.35194/mji.v13i1.1394

Utina, R. (2012). Kecerdasan Ekologis Dalam Kearifan Lokal Masyarakat Bajo Desa Torosiaje Provinsi Gorontalo. *Prosiding Konferensi Dan Seminar Nasional Pusat Studi Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia Ke 21*.

Wardhana, A. P. S., & Farokhah, F. A. (2021). Suran Di Tengah Pageblug: Dampak Covid-19 Terhadap Tradisi Jawa Pada Masa Adaptasi Kebiasaan Baru. *Jurnal Penelitian Sejarah Dan Budaya*, *7*(1), 1–30. https://doi.org/10.36424/jpsb.v7i1.211

Wibisono, M. Y., Truna, D. S., & Rahman, M. T. (2021). Turning religion from cause to reducer of panic during the COVID-19 pandemic. *HTS Theological Studies*, *77*(4), 1–8.

Widyanti, T. (2015). Penerapan nilai-nilai kearifan lokal dalam budaya masyarakat kampung adat Cireundeu sebagai sumber pembelajaran IPS. *Jurnal Pendidikan Ilmu Sosial*, *24*(2), 157–162.

© 2023 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

Journal of Contemporary Rituals and Traditions
Vol. 1, No. 1 (2023), 25-42
DOI: 10.15575/jcrt.212

Safeguarding Communities: Exploring the Tradition of Tolak Bala in Nagari Bungus

Resta Lisman[1], Darmaiza[2], Dwi Wahyuni[3*]

[1] Universitas Islam Negeri Imam Bonjol Padang, Indonesia; Email: rmamulya23@yahoo.com
[2] Universitas Islam Negeri Imam Bonjol Padang, Indonesia; Email: darmaiza@uinib.ac.id
[3] Universitas Islam Negeri Imam Bonjol Padang, Indonesia; Email: dwiwahyuni@uinib.ac.id
* Corresponding author

Received April 16, 2023; Accepted June 28, 2023; Published: July 14, 2023

Abstract

This study aims to examine the tradition of tolak bala in Nagari Bungus, including the changes that have occurred, the factors influencing the persistence of the tradition, and the meanings understood by the community regarding the tradition. A qualitative approach was employed, and data were collected through interviews and participatory observation. The findings reveal changes in the tradition of tolak bala in Nagari Bungus, encompassing changes in the surrounding environment and social activities of the community. The tradition of tolak bala has had a positive impact on the community, such as improving their relationship with Allah Swt, enhancing economic conditions, and abandoning negative behaviors. Factors influencing the persistence of the tradition of tolak bala include the community's beliefs and knowledge, religious activities, and the roles of traditional and religious leaders. The community understands the tradition of tolak bala as a means of protection from dangers and as an effort to seek help from Allah Swt to avert calamities. This research provides deeper insights into the tradition of tolak bala in Nagari Bungus and has implications for social and cultural changes in the community. Recommendations are given to the Bungus community and local authorities to preserve and maintain the tradition of tolak bala as a valuable cultural heritage and to conduct further research on this tradition in other regions.

Keywords: Community; Nagari Bungus; preservation; tolak bala; tradition.

Introduction

Traditions are an essential part of community life and are a cultural heritage passed down from generation to generation (Graburn, 2000; Yang, Shafi, Song, & Yang, 2018). One of the traditions still practiced in Nagari Bungus, West Sumatra, is the "tolak bala" tradition. This tradition is believed to have the power to protect the community from various calamities and disasters that can threaten their lives.

Nagari Bungus, a region located in West Sumatra, has a long history of preserving the "tolak bala" tradition. However, in recent years, significant changes have occurred within the Bungus community. The impacts of modernization and external influences have affected the perspectives and behaviors of the people towards the "tolak bala" tradition. Therefore, it is important to understand the changes that have taken place, the factors influencing the continuity of the tradition, and the meanings attributed to this tradition by the community.

Currently, in the western part of Bungus, specifically Labuhan Tarok, the "tolak bala" tradition is no longer practiced by the local community due to the passage of time. However, in the eastern part of Bungus, specifically Kayu Aro and Bungus Timur, this tradition is still being observed. The traditions that have disappeared and those that have endured are influenced by social factors, particularly the people surrounding the

community, such as family and social roles/status, and possibly economic factors or changes. The inability of community members to meet their basic needs has led to social disparities, prompting people to think rationally.

The "tolak bala" tradition is a traditional ritual that has been performed since ancient times and is practiced in many cultures. Its purpose is to ward off disasters, both personal and those affecting the village. The "tolak bala" ritual is referred to by the community as an activity to preserve and heal the village. Previous research can be categorized into two main areas: the meanings and significance of the "tolak bala" tradition and the religious aspects within the tradition.

The first category of research focuses on the meanings and significance of the "tolak bala" tradition (Hasbullah, Toyo, & Awang Pawi, 2017; Mustamin, 2017; Qodim & Hernawan, 2023; Rahmawati, Nurhadi, & Suseno, 2017). This category emphasizes that the "tolak bala" ritual is still performed in various regions because it is considered to have important functions and meanings for the community. The ritual is seen as a way to preserve and heal the village, protect oneself and the community from disasters, maintain balance and harmony in community life, and express gratitude to God for the blessings given. Additionally, these studies highlight that the "tolak bala" tradition is the result of acculturation between Islam and the existing local beliefs, as well as a form of religious expression and plea for assistance from God.

The second category includes research on the religious aspects of the "tolak bala" tradition (Madriani, 2021; Nurozi, 2016; Sairaji & Muslimah, 2020; Syahrun, Bakar, & Ghafur, 2021). These studies show that the religious aspects play a significant role in the "tolak bala" tradition, both in the spiritual, theological, and Islamic educational contexts. This category consistently demonstrates that the religious dimension has a profound impact on this practice. The research findings reveal that the "tolak bala" tradition is not only seen as a cultural ritual but also has a spiritual depth that connects it to beliefs and religious practices. Madriani (2021) explores the theological aspects of the "tolak bala" tradition in Parit Setia Village, Sambas Regency, West Kalimantan, while Nurozi (2016) examines the Rebo Wekasan ritual in Sitanjung Village, Tegal Regency, Central Java, in a social and religious context. Sairaji and Muslimah (2020) examine the Islamic educational values contained in the "tolak bala" tradition in Mendawai, Palangka Raya City, while Syahrun, Bakar, and Ghafur (2021) discuss the social and religious perspectives of the "atib ko ambai" ritual in Rokan Hulu. Overall, these studies provide a deeper understanding of the importance of the religious dimension in preserving and perpetuating the "tolak bala" tradition.

Dengan kategorisasi ini, penelitian sebelumnya telah memberikan pemahaman yang lebih mendalam mengenai makna dan signifikansi tradisi tolak bala serta aspek keagamaan yang terlibat dalam pelaksanaannya. Namun, masih diperlukan penelitian lebih lanjut untuk melengkapi pemahaman tentang tradisi tolak bala dalam konteks budaya dan masyarakat yang berbeda.

This research aims to gather further information about the "tolak bala" tradition in Nagari Bungus. In this study, we will explore the changes that have occurred in the "tolak bala" tradition, the factors influencing its continuity, and the meanings understood by the community regarding this tradition. Data will be collected through interviews with community leaders, participatory observations, and analysis of documents related to the "tolak bala" tradition.

This research is expected to provide a better understanding of the "tolak bala" tradition in Nagari Bungus. The findings of this study are anticipated to offer deeper insights into the social and cultural changes that have taken place within the Bungus

community. Furthermore, it aims to provide recommendations to the community and local authorities for preserving and safeguarding the "tolak bala" tradition as a valuable cultural heritage. Additionally, this research can serve as a basis for further studies on the "tolak bala" tradition in other regions.

Research Methods

This research adopts a qualitative descriptive approach through field research methods. Through interviews, primary data is obtained from informants such as Mr. Lurah Efendi Rostam, Datuak Ependi, Datuak Syamsudin, Mr. Iza, Datuak Ali Mual, and Datuak Rais. Additionally, secondary data is acquired from relevant literature. This research focuses on Nagari Bungus, with specific attention to two different areas regarding the continuity of the "tolak bala" tradition: Bungus Barat in Labuhan Tarok (vanished tradition) and Bungus Barat in Kayu Aro and Bungus Timur (persisting tradition).

The data collection technique used is interviews, employing a semi-structured or guided approach. The interviews are conducted in a relaxed and spontaneous atmosphere, with the assistance of recording devices such as mobile phones to facilitate note-taking. The obtained data will be analyzed using Miles and Huberman's data analysis techniques, involving data reduction, presentation of data in tables and narratives, and drawing conclusions based on the analyzed findings.

Results and Discussion

1. History of "Tolak Bala" in Nagari Bungus

In this research, we traced the history of the "tolak bala" tradition in Nagari Bungus. Based on information obtained from local informants, the "tolak bala" tradition has been passed down through generations and has become an integral part of the Bungus community's life. This tradition is believed to have existed since ancient times and has been preserved until the present day. Along with the changes in time, some adaptations have occurred in the practice of the "tolak bala" tradition, but its essence remains intact.

The "tolak bala" tradition is commonly observed among the Bungus community with the aim of warding off disasters or seeking protection from harm. The community responds to various disasters in different ways. One of the phenomena is through the "tolak bala" ritual. The community performs the "tolak bala" ritual and prays for the safety of the entire village. The "tolak bala" ritual is a longstanding tradition in the Bungus community and continues to be maintained to this day.

This ritual is carried out with the intention of rejecting calamities or disasters, both at a personal and village level. The "tolak bala" ritual is also known as an activity to preserve and heal the village. This indicates that the "tolak bala" ritual is the result of acculturation between Islam and the ancient beliefs present in the community.

This phenomenon is also carried out by various ethnic groups in Indonesia. However, with the progress of time and technological advancements, the tradition of the "tolak bala" ritual is either still preserved to this day or gradually being abandoned. The practice of the "tolak bala" ritual is considered important and irreplaceable for the Bungus community. Although some Muslims may not believe in this practice, it continues to persist until now.

The origin of the "tolak bala" tradition in Nagari Bungus, according to the Ninik Mamak or the elders, is described as a history that cannot be considered as an actual event

because it has been passed down from person to person through oral tradition. Therefore, the "tolak bala" tradition has long existed in Nagari Bungus and is still maintained to this day.

The history of "tolak bala" in the areas where it is still practiced involves conducting rituals to ward off calamities or misfortunes. The initial emergence of the "tolak bala" tradition in Nagari Bungus in the past was due to the frequent occurrence of calamities in the area. The people had forgotten about God, ignored the words of the ulama (religious scholars), and sidelined religious matters. Religious obligations, such as performing the five daily prayers, were rarely or never fulfilled as people were preoccupied with their respective worldly activities, including playing dominoes, engaging in cockfighting, rampant gambling, adultery, and more. Consequently, various diseases and a prolonged drought season plagued the community, resulting in failed harvests, natural disasters, and barren fields. These challenges or problems that befell the Bungus community were referred to as "Penceklik." The term "Penceklik" signifies.

> *apo yang di tanam urang disiko, ujung-ujung e akan mati sadualah e, indak adoh tumbuah tumbuhan yang iduik, paneh kancang melebihi dari pado biaso, rumpuik-rumpuik mati, tanaman mati indak adoh yang jadi atau iduik ciek alah e do, sehinggo urang disiko manyabuik e dengan istilah "Penceklik". Terjadinyo penceklik di masyarakat, sebagian urang disiko banyak yang marantau, dan kehidupan urang di siko alah mulai payah. Akhirnyo yang tadi nyo dima-dima ba ampok (main domino), dima-dima ba judi, tu urang tu alah mulai indak main itu lai do. Katoanlah urang ko indak bisa mengadoan judi lai karena perekonomian urang di siko indak adoh yang iduik lai atau bisa di kecean perekonomian urang disiko alah mati* (Ependi, Personal Communication, June 4, 2021).
>
> What people plant here, in the end, will also die. No plants can survive, the condition is worse than usual, the grass dies, the plants die too, nothing grows or thrives well here. Therefore, people here call it 'Penceklik'. The occurrence of 'Penceklik' in the community has led to many people migrating, and life here has become difficult. Eventually, what they used to spend on playing dominoes, gambling, now people here no longer engage in such activities. We can say that they can no longer gamble because the economy here no longer grows or can revive the stagnant economy here.

So, the term used by the Bungus community for "Penceklik" is that whatever is planted by the people will all die, no living plants, the intense heat surpasses the usual, the grass dies, the plants die, nothing grows or survives, hence the community refers to it as "Penceklik". The occurrence of "Penceklik" in the community led to many people migrating, and life became difficult here. Eventually, people everywhere used to play dominoes, everywhere they used to gamble, now no one wants to play anymore. Let's say people can no longer engage in gambling because the economy here no longer exists or can be said to be dead.

The Bungus community sees the calamities that occurred at that time and calls it "Penceklik". Since the occurrence of "Penceklik," many people migrated, and life here became difficult, many people became unemployed. Eventually, the economy here died, and there is nothing left alive.

Because of the hardships of life at that time, a dream came to one of the ulama or commonly known as Angku or Tuangku, a person considered knowledgeable in religious studies. Tuangku explained that the purpose of the dream was to hold the tradition of

"tolak bala," a way to restore Nagari Bungus by rejecting calamities or what is commonly known as the "tolak bala" tradition, as it can ward off disasters. If we do not perform the "tolak bala" tradition as shown in the dream, it will result in a prolonged drought, and the calamities that befall the community will not cease, or what the community commonly refers to as prolonged "Penceklik".

Eventually, Tuangku, who received the dream not just once but three times in a row, conveyed the message and handed it over to the Ulama, the traditional leaders (Petinggi Adat), the Niniak Mamak, and the mosque committee members. They gathered to discuss and organize the "tolak bala" event. They also advised the community to abandon negative practices such as cockfighting, gambling, playing dominoes, and disregarding the prohibitions of Allah, among others. Whatever Allah commands should be followed, and people should draw closer to Him.

In the past, information was not conveyed through written letters but through oral communication or word of mouth. The decision to follow the "tolak bala" tradition was first conveyed to the mosque or prayer hall, and then a letter was prepared to be shown to the village chief, the LPM (Community Empowerment Institution), and all the mosque and prayer hall committee members. Detailed data was collected, including the implementation process, gathering points, and conclusion. For example, the community would gather at a designated location, such as an event held in Bungus Timur, Kalampaian. The Bungus community would arrive before Maghrib prayer and then perform Maghrib prayer together at the mosque. The event would commence after Maghrib prayer. It would start with burning the kumayan, which has become a tradition. The kumayan is not meant to be requested but rather to signify the start of the main event. After that, prayers would be conducted at the mosque or prayer hall, followed by reciting takbir and immediately commencing the event. Finally, the community would gather in a field.

Therefore, an agreement was reached that when organizing the "tolak bala" tradition, the community should purchase buffaloes instead of cows. This is because buffaloes and cows have different behaviors. Cows do not like water, while buffaloes are fond of it. Thus, through discussions with the Ulama, the traditional leaders, the Niniak Mamak, and the mosque or prayer hall committee members, an agreement was made to conduct "tolak bala" by following these steps:

> *Mandabiah kabau di kapalo banda dan mandoa di ikua banda" artie mamotong kabau di Tabek atau Looh (namo tampek dulu) dan bardoa di Koto Gadang. Sebab tersirat kabau yang awak potong darah e akan mengalir dari ujung bukiak ka ujung sungai hingga sampai ke bawah. Baa kok harus kabau yang awak dabiah?, sebab kabau ko lebih suko jo air, kalau sobok jo air dak ka bisa kalua lai do. Baa kok awak harus mangharoan air, di karanokan airlah yang penyubur tanaman. Jadi dapek kesepakatan itu yang harus di sembelih di atas dan di bawah lanjut samo mandoa* (Ependi, Personal Communication, June 4, 2021).
>
> Cut the buffalo at Kapalo Banda and slaughter it at Ikua Banda. The reason behind this is that the blood of the buffalo, when it is cut, will flow from upstream to downstream of the river. Why does it have to be a buffalo that is cut? Because buffaloes are more fond of water, and when they come into contact with water, their blood will flow smoothly. Why use water? Because water is a substance that nourishes plants. So, after reaching an agreement, the buffalo must be slaughtered both upstream and downstream, followed by prayers..

The initial practice of "tolak bala" by the community involved cutting the buffalo at the head of the banda or at the end of the banda, and praying below the banda, which means cutting the buffalo at the top or end of the hill, such as in Tabek or Looh (place names), and praying below in Koto Gadang (place name). Implicitly, when the buffalo is cut at the top of the hill, its blood will flow down to the end of the river. Why did the community use buffaloes instead of cows? It is because buffaloes are fond of water, while cows do not prefer water. Why do we rely on water? It is because water is what nourishes plants. The community agreed that the animal used for slaughter would be a buffalo, starting from the top of the hill to the end of the river, and then it would be brought down, followed by a collective prayer below. If there were no buffaloes available or if the community could not afford to buy them, they could be replaced with other animals such as goats.

> *Pada masa dulu hewan kerbau yang di pakai untuk acara tolak bala akan tetapi kalau sekarang masyarakat memakai hewan kambing di karenakan hewan kerbau sangat susah di dapat dan harganya terlalu mahal dan masyarakat tidak mampu membeli hewan kerbau karena untuk mendapatkan uang masyarakat harus bergotong royong untuk mencukupi dana. Karena itu masyarakat tidak sanggup membeli hewan kerbau dan diganti dengan hewan kambing, karena kambinglah yang mudah dicari dan mudah didapat dan harganya juga tidak terlalu mahal. Pada masa dulu rangtuo kita sangat mudah untuk mendapatkan kerbau. Kalau kini awak mambuek acara ataupun tradisi awak yo harus bagotong royong mancari dana, karano semua panitia yang ikuik serta ikuik manyumbag lo untuk mencari dana, kalau dari panitia pasti indak ka sampai pitih ko do, atau bantuan lain. Jadi di ambiaklah kesepakatan panitia ko untuk bagotong royong ka musajik dan masyarakat satampek ko untuk mancari dana, kalaupun kurang juo dana yang awak cari, tapaso awak mamintak ka tampek yang lain. Kalau lah salasai mancari dana dan dana yang awak cari ko alah cukuik baru di mulai acara tradisi tolak bala* (Rais, Personal Communication, June 13, 2021).
>
> In the past, buffaloes were used for the "tolak bala" event. However, nowadays, the community uses goats because buffaloes are difficult to obtain and their prices are too high. The community cannot afford to buy buffaloes because they need to work together (gotong-royong) to raise funds. Therefore, goats are used as a substitute because they are easier to find, more accessible, and more affordable. In the past, parents could easily acquire buffaloes. However, now, if the community wants to hold an event or tradition, they need to work together to raise funds because all the organizers need to contribute and share the burden of fundraising. If they rely solely on the organizers, it is highly likely that the funds will be insufficient, and assistance from others will be needed. Therefore, the organizers agreed to collectively raise funds from the local mosque and community, and if the funds raised are still insufficient, they will seek assistance from other parties. Once the fundraising process is completed and the required funds are obtained, the "tolak bala" tradition can begin.

In the past, the community or "rangtuo" used buffaloes because they were easy to obtain and their prices were not as high as they are now. However, nowadays, the community uses goats because they cannot afford to buy buffaloes due to their high prices. The community purchases goats through collective efforts, as goats are easily available

and more affordable compared to buffaloes. Therefore, the community now prefers to use goats instead of buffaloes. Prior to organizing the event or tradition, the community works together to raise funds, starting from the mosque and extending to the community, going from one village to another.

Until now, the community continues to practice the "tolak bala" tradition. In the past, the "rangtuo" mentioned that the last step of the "tolak bala" ceremony should involve sacrificing a goat. During the "tolak bala" ceremony, there is no provision of food or offerings, but some community members take the initiative to offer drinks to those participating in or following the tradition. This is because many people do not bring anything during the journey, as some may only observe the "tolak bala" tradition from their homes, while others provide drinks and food along the way.

When the community passes a bridge, it is considered a crossing point for "dubiliah" or jinn. At that point, the community loudly recites the takbir or monotheistic declaration in unison, so that it can be heard by the "dubiliah" or jinn, urging them to leave that place and not return. The intention behind this practice is:

> Pas awak lewat di simpang atau jembatan kan di situ banyak basarang dubiliah atau jin tu, jadi awak manyabuik e harus jaleh kancang, dan kompak bia inyo pai jauh dari situ dan bia inyo dak baliak ka tampek asal e. baa cro e awak bisa tau kalau di situ basarang dubiliah? kan hewan-hewan yang lewat atau yang alah disitu pasti nampak dek e kayak buruang bekonyo babunyi dan tabang e kalau nampak dan hewan anjing juga pasti mengonggong kalau nampak dubiliah atau jin tu, bia di suruh pai lewat gonggongannyo yang kancang tu. Jadi secara tersirat tolak bala itu menyuruh pergi dubiliah jin atau setan. Karano dubiliah dan jin atau setan acok bana yang berlawanan dengan perintah allah swt, apa yang di perintahkan oleh allah swt pasti di larang dubiliah. Itu ilmu yang pasti, apa yang di larang pasti di suruh, apa yang di suruh pasti di larang itulah sifat dubiliah. Makanya kalau dilarikan ke perintah allah SWT sudah jelas itu di nyatakannya apa yang di larang pasti di suruh (Rais, Personal Communication, June 13, 2021).

So the term is that the community is expelling "dubiliah" that reside in places like trees, bridges, and wherever there are no inhabitants. The community mentions and recites takbir or monotheistic declarations during the "tolak bala" tradition to make the "dubiliah" go far away from that place. The community recites takbir from the beginning until the end or the final destination of the "tolak bala" tradition. And the "dubiliah" is disposed of in the sea so that they do not return to their original location, done by sacrificing a buffalo. That's why the community accompanies the buffalo until the last day, where they then sacrifice a goat, which has already been slaughtered, and its carcass is floated in the sea so that the "dubiliah" can feast on its blood and be carried away by the current. The act of floating the carcass signifies that if there are any "dubiliah," they will consume the blood and the goat's body, and they are instructed to go far away from Nagari Bungus and not return.

So, "tolak bala" is about sending away the demons or evil spirits that exist in Nagari Bungus, and it is done by using a goat and floating it in the sea on the final day of the "tolak bala" tradition. However, nowadays, it is rare for the community to use a goat for floating or sacrificing. Now, the community primarily focuses on prayers from the beginning to the end of the event, as we no longer use goats for floating in the sea.

The annual implementation of the "tolak bala" tradition is not determined by the

start of the month. However, the specific days for its implementation are fixed for three consecutive days, namely Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, as those were considered the most auspicious days according to the community's belief in the past. The chosen days for "tolak bala" cannot be changed or altered since they have been established long ago and are not subject to questioning. The "tolak bala" event involves everyone, including the ulama, community leaders, particularly the Niniak Mamak or Datuak KAN, and all the participants from the community. The event takes place for three consecutive days. The implementation of the "tolak bala" tradition in Bungus begins with the first day after performing the Maghrib prayer, starting from Tanah Sirah or the hilltop to Jaruai. The second day starts from Jaruai to Simpang Empat, and on the final day, it continues from Simpang Empat to Muaro, which is the final location for expelling the calamity. It is there that the community sacrifices a goat and throws it into the sea. This ritual serves as a means to reject misfortune.

> Now, when starting to implement the 'tolak bala' tradition, the community makes prior agreements and consults with the people. 'If there are no disasters or unresolved issues affecting the community, should we still carry out the 'tolak bala' tradition this year?' That's what I asked Mr. Datuak Ependi. Because it is the community that participates and follows the 'tolak bala' tradition, if no one joins the event, it won't be fulfilled. The community also agrees to carry out the 'tolak bala' tradition. There was a time when I asked the community about it, and they remained silent, so an agreement was reached not to perform the 'tolak bala' tradition that year. The 'tolak bala' tradition is not conducted every year; sometimes the community expresses a desire to organize different traditions or events before implementing the 'tolak bala' tradition (Ependi, Personal Communication, June 4, 2021).

Nowadays, whenever an event is organized, it must be discussed with the Niniak Mamak first before involving the community. For example, if there is a disaster affecting the community, such as extensive crop damage or economic difficulties due to earthquakes, the community will consider initiating the "tolak bala" tradition. However, the "tolak bala" tradition is not carried out every year. It is discussed with the community to determine whether they want to perform the tradition or not. There have been instances where the "tolak bala" tradition was not conducted in previous years because if the community can resolve the issues or disasters without it, there is no need to perform the tradition. It is only when the problems cannot be resolved that discussions take place, leading to an agreement to carry out the "tolak bala" tradition.

The timing of the "tolak bala" tradition is not determined by the month, but the specific day must be adhered to. If there is a new disaster or calamity, the tradition is initiated. However, even if there is no immediate threat, the tradition may still be observed depending on the willingness of the community. If the community wants to perform the "tolak bala" tradition, it is organized accordingly, but if the community does not wish to participate, the tradition is not forced upon them. It is ultimately the community itself that participates and enlivens the tradition.

The history of the "tolak bala" tradition in the area that no longer practices it, such as Labuhan Tarok in Nagari Bungus, is still the same as the history of the tradition in the areas that continue to practice it. In Labuhan Tarok, the "tolak bala" tradition merged with Kayu Aro in Bungus Barat. Specifically in Labuhan Tarok, the tradition is no longer observed, as it joined forces with Kayu Aro and Jaruai. However, in Bungus Barat, particularly in the Kayu Aro sub-district, the tradition is still being practiced to this day.

> In Labuhan Tarok, the "tolak bala" tradition has indeed not been carried out for the past six or seven years, as some of the Bungus community has joined the Bungus

> Barat community in Kayu Aro and Jaruai. The majority of the people in that area are traditional and religious figures who always participate in various traditions and events. As a result, many people from Labuhan Tarok participate in the traditions held in Kayu Aro, which is why the "tolak bala" tradition and other traditions are rarely practiced in Labuhan Tarok (Syamsudin, Personal Communication, June 8, 2021).

The "tolak bala" tradition has existed for a long time in Nagari Bungus, including Labuhan Tarok. The term "tolak bala" refers to the entry of calamities that have occurred frequently in Nagari Bungus. These calamities have caused various problems, such as widespread pests, difficulty in managing crops resulting in many plants dying or not growing, undesirable occurrences within the community, natural disasters, failed harvests in the fields, and the depletion of fish in the sea. Immoral activities and adultery have also become prevalent everywhere. All these calamities that occur in the community are often attributed to "tolak bala."

To counter these calamities, the "tolak bala" tradition is carried out by reciting the words of Allah, engaging in remembrance and prayers along the way. Before performing the "tolak bala" tradition, the community assesses the prevailing conditions, such as prolonged drought affecting crops and causing economic difficulties for the people. The purpose of conducting the "tolak bala" tradition is to reject disasters, avoid problems, and seek protection from Allah SWT against the calamities that befall Nagari Bungus.

Generally, people in Labuhan Tarok are aware of the "tolak bala" tradition. However, only a portion of the community in Labuhan Tarok is willing to participate in the tradition. Therefore, the "tolak bala" tradition is no longer practiced in Labuhan Tarok because it is challenging to encourage the community to engage in acts of goodness such as rejecting calamities. Some individuals are only interested in the results, while in Bungus Barat, particularly in Kayu Aro, the tradition of "tolak bala" is practiced every year without fail. The response from the Bungus community varies.

> In the Labuhan Tarok community, the "tolak bala" tradition is no longer practiced because it is already carried out in Kayu Aro. Therefore, the community can observe the "tolak bala" tradition in Kayu Aro and does not need to perform it in Labuhan Tarok. Not practicing the "tolak bala" tradition in the community also ensures protection against calamities and disasters. Even if any disasters occur, the community can effectively resolve those issues (Syamsudin, Personal Communication, June 8, 2021).

That's the response from the Labuhan Tarok community, and there are also some community members who are not aware of this "tolak bala" tradition, such as:

> Is there a 'tolak bala' tradition in Labuhan Tarok? Isn't it the one carried out in Kayu Aro? And some people say, what is 'tolak bala' actually? And there are also those who know and associate it with the Tabuik tradition in Pariaman. However, there are those who know but remain silent and prioritize their own affairs (Syamsudin, Personal Communication, June 8, 2021).

In Nurul Hidayah Mosque in Labuhan Tarok, the mosque committee always receives an invitation letter directly from the village's customary leader, which is then distributed to the mosque committee members, including in Labuhan Tarok, to participate in the "tolak bala" tradition. The committee has also informed the local community and made announcements in the mosque after each prayer, encouraging them to join or carry out the "tolak bala" tradition that will also take place in Labuhan Tarok.

The announcements are made after each morning, noon, and evening prayers, as well as after Friday prayers, as these are the times when many people attend prayers at the mosque. However, while some people listen and are willing to participate, others remain silent and hold their own opinions, such as:

> Why should the community perform the 'tolak bala' tradition? Labuhan Tarok is safe and nothing happens even if we don't perform the 'tolak bala' tradition. If there are any calamities that occur, they are surely the will of Allah SWT, not because of 'tolak bala.' Why should we believe in myths? (Syamsudin, Personal Communication, June 8, 2021).

The mosque committee in Labuhan Tarok also wants to carry out the "tolak bala" tradition in their area because they believe that all the necessary facilities are already in place. However, they face challenges in getting the community to cooperate in performing good deeds for the village and themselves. The responses from the community vary, with some expressing doubt and questioning the significance of the "tolak bala" tradition. They wonder why it is necessary to believe in myths and rituals when Labuhan Tarok is considered safe and there have been no major calamities. Despite these differing opinions, the "tolak bala" tradition is still carried out in Labuhan Tarok, with many individuals actively participating.

The mosque committee receives invitations directly from the village's customary leader, which are then distributed to the mosque committee members in Labuhan Tarok. They inform the local community and make announcements in the mosque after each prayer, encouraging people to participate in the upcoming "tolak bala" tradition. However, not everyone in the community is receptive to the idea. Some are skeptical of the tradition and prefer to focus on their own personal matters.

The mosque committee acknowledges the challenges and limitations they face, as their ability to organize and carry out the tradition largely depends on the willingness and participation of the community. They emphasize that their role is to inform and announce the tradition to the congregants, but ultimately, it is up to the individuals to decide whether or not to participate. The committee members themselves, including the narrator, express their personal commitment to the "tolak bala" tradition and mention that they continue to participate in the tradition held in Kayu Aro. However, in Labuhan Tarok, the tradition has not been observed for a long time (Iza, Personal Communication, June 12, 2021).

Overall, the community's response to the "tolak bala" tradition in Labuhan Tarok varies, with some showing interest and participation while others remain skeptical or uninformed about the tradition.

The community in Labuhan Tarok no longer practices the "tolak bala" tradition due to the difficulty of engaging the community in acts of goodness such as warding off disasters. The community tends to focus solely on the end results and is hesitant to participate in the tradition. This is partly because the tradition is already being observed annually in Kayu Aro. It is believed that some of the misfortunes that befall the community, such as accidents, crop failures, and fishermen facing challenges due to storms or bad weather, are consequences of not performing the "tolak bala" tradition. However, the enthusiasm for the tradition is lacking in Labuhan Tarok, as the community remains silent when the announcement is made.

The community's reluctance to participate in the tradition is not without reason. They prioritize their personal and occupational responsibilities. The predominant occupations in the community include laborers, fishermen, and farmers. While there is a small

percentage of individuals engaged in trading, civil service, and private employment, many residents of Bungus work as laborers at the fishing port and the port connecting Padang and Mentawai. They engage in small-scale trading around the port and work as manual laborers. Local residents involved in various businesses are unable to participate in the "tolak bala" tradition as they prioritize their economic activities.

The livelihoods of the community depend on these occupations. The wages earned by laborers are not high, as they are affected by the prevailing circumstances. When many people travel to Mentawai and goods are unloaded, such as bananas or other products from Mentawai to Padang, the highest wage an individual can receive is around 200,000 Indonesian Rupiah. However, if fewer people travel to Mentawai, daily wages can be as low as 30,000 to 50,000 Indonesian Rupiah, and in some cases, individuals may not receive any wages due to the lack of work.

In Labuhan Tarok, there is a shortage of religious and traditional leaders, and the current generation lacks individuals who can be relied upon to engage in acts of goodness. Even if there are individuals in the current generation who are willing to do good, they are usually already married and prioritize their families. However, such individuals are rare, and most of them can be found in Kayu Aro and Bungus Timur.

2. Changes in the Tolak Bala Tradition in Nagari Bungus

In this study, we examined the changes that have occurred in the Tolak Bala tradition in Nagari Bungus. The research findings indicate that there has been a shift in the implementation of this tradition. Some Tolak Bala practices that were once regularly performed by the entire Bungus community are now only maintained in certain specific areas. This shift can be attributed to factors such as urbanization, changing mindsets, and the influence of external cultures. However, despite these changes, the Tolak Bala tradition continues to hold significant importance for the Bungus community as a means of protection and reverence for their ancestral traditions.

The changes observed in the areas where the tradition persists have gradually brought about positive transformations in the surrounding environment. This includes the organization of religious and social activities within the community. Following the observance of the Tolak Bala tradition, the Bungus community has been able to ward off the misfortunes that were prevalent at the time. The impact of this tradition has been highly beneficial for the community, as they have started to grow closer to Allah SWT, forsaking prohibited activities such as cockfighting, gambling, and intoxication. Moreover, the community's agricultural yields have improved, and they no longer experience crop failures.

The changes that have occurred in the community since the implementation of the Tolak Bala tradition in Bungus have resulted in the community being protected from impending disasters. This is because the people here have started to develop a fear of Allah SWT and have begun to draw closer to Him. They have also begun to forsake activities that are prohibited by Allah, such as gambling, dominoes, and the like. Although there are still some who do not pay heed to these changes and continue to persist in engaging in activities that are forbidden by Allah SWT. The community recognizes the preservation of the Tolak Bala tradition up until this day, and during its observance, it is always accompanied by good intentions and does not violate or compromise religious values (Rais, Personal Communication, June 8, 2021).

When we observe the changes that have occurred in the community, we can see that things have started to improve, and there is a decrease in the occurrence of calamities.

The rice harvest and plant growth have improved, and there are noticeable changes before and after the implementation of the Tolak Bala tradition. The results are apparent, and the community is willing to participate in the Tolak Bala tradition. The Niniak Mamak (traditional leaders) and the community now conduct the Tolak Bala tradition annually or once a year. This practice is considered obligatory because the community believes that performing Tolak Bala can prevent the occurrence of calamities or disasters in Nagari Bungus.

> We perform the Tolak Bala tradition to prevent the occurrence of future disasters. We are unaware of the specific calamities that may unfold in the future, but it is better to take preventive measures beforehand. The Tolak Bala tradition serves as a means of prevention. Furthermore, we have witnessed improvements since we began practicing the Tolak Bala tradition. The community does not rely solely on this tradition, as calamities or disasters come from Allah SWT and are unpredictable. Therefore, the community conducts the Tolak Bala tradition annually to safeguard against potential disasters. Since implementing the Tolak Bala tradition in Bungus, there have been noticeable improvements, and the community has moved away from prohibitions (Ali Mual, Personal Communication, June 12, 2021).

The Tolak Bala tradition is conducted to prevent the occurrence of future misfortunes or disasters within the Bungus community. Since the community is unaware of the specific calamities that may arise in the future, it is best to take preventative measures by performing the Tolak Bala tradition once a year. The community does not solely depend on the Tolak Bala tradition, as future misfortunes are determined by Allah SWT, and the exact nature of these misfortunes is unknown to the Bungus community.

> It can be seen that since the implementation of the Tolak Bala tradition in Nagari Bungus, there has been an improvement, with no prolonged calamities occurring. If a calamity or disaster can be resolved effectively within the community, there is no need to carry out this Tolak Bala tradition. The community has resumed their usual activities such as farming, agriculture, gardening, and fishing. Anything that is forbidden by Allah SWT and considered harmful has been abandoned, although there are some members of the community who may violate these prohibitions or do not believe in the significance of the Tolak Bala tradition. This may be due to a lack of religious understanding or knowledge. However, the tradition of Tolak Bala is still being observed by the community to this day" (Ali Mual, Personal Communication, June 12, 2021).

Nagari Bungus has begun to improve, and the community has resumed their regular activities. The prohibitions that were forbidden by Allah SWT have started to be abandoned since the implementation of the Tolak Bala tradition. However, there are still individuals who violate Allah's commands and do not believe in the significance of the Tolak Bala tradition, considering it as mere mythology.

The changes that have occurred in the lost areas of the community have led to a more rational approach in dealing with calamities or situations that arise, such as crop failure, farming, fishing, and other disasters. The community does not consider these issues to be related to the absence of performing the Tolak Bala tradition in that area. Tolak Bala is not considered essential as the community is more focused on their economic livelihoods. Problems related to crop failure and similar issues are not seen as taboo but rather as a form of calamity that comes from the Creator.

> The community in Labuhan Tarok sees no connection between the Tolak Bala tradition and the calamities or disasters that befall them. They have more faith in Allah than in this tradition, as they believe it to be a mere myth. The community prioritizes their own affairs and work. The calamities that occur in Labuhan Tarok, such as crop failure or not catching fish in the sea, are considered afflictions that come from Allah Himself, not from their own actions. The changes that have taken place in Labuhan Tarok regarding the Tolak Bala tradition are regarded solely as myths (Syamsudin, June 12, 2021).

In Labuhan Tarok, the Bungus community perceives no connection between the Tolak Bala tradition and the calamities that befall them, as they have greater faith in Allah SWT than in this tradition. According to the locals, the Tolak Bala tradition is considered merely a mythical belief, and they prioritize their own affairs and other matters. Hence, the changes that have taken place in Labuhan Tarok regarding the Tolak Bala tradition are solely related to mythical beliefs, as the community has more trust in the Almighty Creator, Allah SWT. The disappearance of the Tolak Bala tradition can be attributed to factors such as education, economy, and social influences from people in their surroundings, including family and societal roles. Economic factors and changes may also have played a role. The community's inability to fulfill their basic needs and the resulting social disparities have led people to adopt a more rational perspective in their beliefs and practices.

3. Causes of the Loss and Survival of the Tolak Bala Tradition

The Tolak Bala tradition persists in Nagari Bungus due to the community's high regard for religion and existing traditions in the area. Therefore, the Tolak Bala tradition continues to be upheld. The community in Bungus Barat, including Kayu Aro and Bungus Timur, has many traditional and religious figures.

To maintain the Tolak Bala tradition in Nagari Bungus, it is performed annually or once a year to ensure that the community always remembers the traditions in Nagari Bungus. Other religious activities, such as Quran recitation competitions, Quran study sessions, and religious gatherings, are also conducted. In places where the tradition is preserved, it is usually because the community strongly adheres to the tradition and performs it consistently every year. These areas are often closer to nature and rely on agriculture as their primary economic activity. Additionally, there are numerous community organizations in the villages, and many individuals actively participate in these organizations, such as managing mosques or other community roles, which further contributes to the preservation of the Tolak Bala tradition and respect for other traditions in Nagari Bungus.

The community in Bungus places a high value on religious beliefs and knowledge, and religious activities are always conducted. Due to their strong religious knowledge and beliefs, the community preserves various traditions and events in Bungus. They always consider the situation and discuss the preservation of traditions in Nagari Bungus, including ongoing discussions about Tolak Bala. The arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic has made it difficult to hold the Tolak Bala tradition, as it has affected all activities and the local economy.

For devout individuals who adhere to religious and traditional practices, not participating in the Tolak Bala tradition may bring a sense of shame among their

community members and raise concerns about potential future calamities. Those who do not perform the Tolak Bala tradition may believe that they will face misfortune and calamity.

Factors that influence the community's participation in the Tolak Bala tradition include the annual or once-a-year practice of the tradition. Several factors contribute to the community's adherence to the tradition. Firstly, the community has a strong belief in and knowledge of religion, which they hold in high regard. Secondly, religious activities are prioritized, and the community has a strong faith in seeking Allah's blessings, such as good health, prosperity, strength, and protection from harm. Thirdly, there are many influential figures in the community, including religious scholars and traditional leaders. The community is also willing to participate in other traditions and events.

The disappearance of the Tolak Bala tradition in Bungus Barat, particularly Labuhan Tarok, is due to the lack of religious knowledge and the absence of traditional and religious figures in the area. The majority of such figures are found in Kayu Aro and Bungus Timur.

The primary reason for not practicing the Tolak Bala tradition in Labuhan Tarok is the lack of religious knowledge and the absence of traditional and religious figures. The community there rarely participates in local organizations as individuals prioritize their personal affairs and work. People in Labuhan Tarok tend to adapt to the changing times and the current millennial generation. Furthermore, Labuhan Tarok is close to a main road.

The reasons why some community members do not participate in the Tolak Bala tradition are social factors influenced by people around them, such as family, roles, social status, and possibly economic factors or changes in the economy. The inability of community members to meet their basic needs results in social disparities that lead people to become more rational in their decision-making.

In Labuhan Tarok, fewer people engage in local organizations, as many individuals work as laborers or motorcycle taxi drivers. Moreover, people in Labuhan Tarok tend to adapt to changing times or imitate the urban lifestyle, including clothing, lifestyle, and changing professions. Discussions in Labuhan Tarok rarely revolve around the Tolak Bala tradition but rather focus on personal affairs and work. Additionally, the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic has made activities and the local economy challenging for the residents.

The factors contributing to the lack of participation in the Tolak Bala tradition include diminished religious belief and knowledge among the community. In the past, there was a strong belief in seeking blessings from Allah. Secondly, the current generation and society are difficult to engage in traditional activities or seeking blessings from Allah. Thirdly, religious activities have been abandoned, whereas they were once prioritized. Fourthly, Labuhan Tarok has sufficient facilities and easy access to funding due to its proximity to the main road. However, there is a lack of driving forces or motivators. Even if one or two individuals take on this role, it is unlikely to be sustained as they prioritize their own families. Finally, there is a lack of cultural transmission from the older generation to the younger generation, resulting in a lack of knowledge about the Tolak Bala ritual among the younger generation.

4. Meanings Understood by the Community Regarding the Tolak Bala Tradition

This research also discusses the meaning understood by the community regarding the Tolak Bala tradition. Through interviews with local informants, we gained insights into the community's understanding and beliefs about this tradition. The meanings understood by the community regarding the Tolak Bala tradition include self-protection and protection of the village from disasters, seeking help from God, maintaining the balance of nature, and honoring ancestors. The Tolak Bala tradition is seen as an expression of religious and cultural beliefs that are ingrained in the identity of the Bungus community.

The meaning attributed by the community to the Tolak Bala tradition is one of seeking protection from danger and offering prayers to Allah SWT through the tradition. It is one of the efforts made by the community to seek help from Allah SWT through the five daily prayers, supplications, and seeking protection from calamities and natural disasters that Allah SWT may bring by conducting the Tolak Bala tradition. In other words, we continue to seek protection from Allah SWT, asking to be kept safe from dangers and calamities that may befall Nagari Bungus. Similar sentiments were expressed by the informant.

> According to me, the meaning understood in the Tolak Bala tradition is that we seek protection from Allah SWT, asking to be kept safe from dangers and calamities. Through this tradition, we offer prayers to Allah SWT and seek His help to ward off any impending disasters (Iza, Personal Communication, June 12, 2021)

That is the meaning according to the informant above regarding the understanding of the community regarding the Tolak Bala tradition. However, the manner in which the tradition is carried out varies. Some perform the Tolak Bala tradition by praying in the mosque, while others may follow practices such as the Tabuik in Pariaman and others.

> Since the implementation of the Tolak Bala tradition, the community has become more aware of the traditions in Nagari Bungus. People have started to fear the arrival of calamities because, regardless, Allah SWT will certainly test us through problems or calamities in the form of upcoming disasters. Therefore, we carry out this tradition to reject and repel disaster (Ependi, Personal Communication, June 4, 2021).

The community is aware that Allah SWT will test us at some point. All kinds of calamities are considered tests for us, even economic difficulties are considered as calamities. Calamities don't necessarily have to be earthquakes or natural disasters; they can also be things like rice and fields being damaged by rats and birds, resulting in failed harvests, or fishermen not catching any fish, or pests spreading everywhere.

> The meaning of the Tolak Bala tradition is a ritual activity aimed at warding off disasters. Tolak Bala can be interpreted as prevention. It can also be understood as a means to ward off disasters. Tolak Bala is usually associated with spiritual and mystical practices. All disasters or dangers are in the hands of Allah SWT, such as diseases, natural disasters, and others. Of course, nobody wishes for calamities to befall them. Calamities can occur at anytime and anywhere without human prediction (Iza, Personal Communication, June 12, 2021)

Although we cannot reject what Allah SWT has decreed, as Muslims, we are encouraged to make efforts, pray, and seek safety from all calamities. One way is through

reciting the Tolak Bala prayer to be protected from various disasters, calamities, and other misfortunes. As Muslims, we are allowed to seek safety from all ongoing or upcoming calamities through prayers to Allah SWT. Supplicating and seeking help from Allah SWT is permissible.

Conclusion

The findings of the research indicate that this tradition has a rich and strong history but has undergone changes in its implementation due to the influence of changing times and external cultural influences. The community of Bungus understands this tradition as a means of protection from disasters, seeking help from God, maintaining the balance of nature, and respecting their ancestors. These conclusions can be used to preserve and sustain the tradition of "tolak bala" and provide further insights into the phenomenon of cultural change within the community.

However, there are limitations to this study. Firstly, the research focused solely on Nagari Bungus in the city of Padang, which limits the generalizability of the findings to this specific context. Secondly, this study employed a qualitative approach, and therefore the results cannot be directly applied to a larger population. Additionally, the limited number of informants may affect the representativeness of the findings. Therefore, further research with a larger sample size and including other regions is needed to broaden the understanding of the tradition of "tolak bala" comprehensively.

References

Graburn, N. H. H. (2000). What is tradition? *Museum Anthropology*, *24*(2-3), 6–11.

Hasbullah, H., Toyo, T., & Awang Pawi, A. A. (2017). Ritual Tolak Bala Pada Masyarakat Melayu (Kajian Pada Masyarakat Petalangan Kecamatan Pangkalan Kuras Kabupaten Pelalawan). *Jurnal Ushuluddin*, *25*(1), 83–100. https://doi.org/10.24014/jush.v25i1.2742

Madriani, R. (2021). Living Teologi Tradisi Tolak Bala Bepapas pada Masyarakat Desa Parit Setia Kecamatan Jawai Kabupaten Sambas Kalimantan Barat. *Jurnal Penelitian Ilmu Ushuluddin*, *1*(3), 260–285. https://doi.org/10.15575/jpiu.12242

Mustamin, K. (2017). Makna Simbolis dalam Tradisi Maccera' Tappareng di Danau Tempe Kabupaten Wajo. *Al-Ulum*, *16*(1), 246. https://doi.org/10.30603/au.v16i1.28

Nurozi, A. (2016). Rebo wekasan dalam Ranah Sosial Keagamaan di Kabupaten Tegal Jawa Tengah (Analisis Terhadap Ritual Rebo wekasan di Desa Sitanjung Lebaksiu). *An-Nuha: Jurnal Kajian Islam, Pendidikan, Budaya Dan Sosial*, *3*(1), 125–136.

Qodim, H., & Hernawan, W. (2023). Azan Pitu: The Pacification of Plagues rituals during the COVID-19 pandemic. *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, *79*(2). https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v79i2.8432

Rahmawati, R., Nurhadi, Z. F., & Suseno, N. S. (2017). Makna Simbolik Tradisi Rebo Kasan. *Jurnal Penelitian Komunikasi*, *20*(1), 61–74. https://doi.org/10.20422/jpk.v20i1.131

Sairaji, A., & Muslimah, M. (2020). Nilai Pendidikan Islam Ritual Budaya Tolak Bala Pada Masyarakat Mendawai di Kota Palangka Raya. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Al-Affan*, *1*(1), 75–83.

Syahrun, N., Bakar, A., & Ghafur, A. (2021). TOLAK BALAK: Tinjauan atas Ritual Atib Ko Ambai di Rokan Hulu. *Nusantara; Journal for Southeast Asian Islamic Studies*, *16*(2), 63. https://doi.org/10.24014/nusantara.v16i2.13632

Yang, Y., Shafi, M., Song, X., & Yang, R. (2018). Preservation of Cultural Heritage Embodied in Traditional Crafts in the Developing Countries. A Case Study of Pakistani Handicraft Industry. *Sustainability*, *10*(5), 1336. https://doi.org/10.3390/su10051336

© 2023 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

This page is intentionally left blank

Journal of Contemporary Rituals and Traditions
Vol. 1, No. 1 (2023), 43-54
DOI: 10.15575/jcrt.319

Bridging Faith and Culture: Unearthing Islamic Values in the Sundanese *Munggahan* Tradition

Yunika Sari[1]

[1] Universitas Islam Negeri Imam Bonjol Padang, Indonesia; Email: yunitatsaqila12@gmail.com

Received March 13, 2023; Accepted June 22, 2023; Published: July 14, 2023

Abstract

This research aims to discuss the Islamic values contained in the *Munggahan* tradition of the Sundanese tribe as part of welcoming the holy month of Ramadan. The research method used is qualitative with literature review and field study, employing descriptive analysis to analyze complex and clear data. The research includes the understanding of the *Munggahan* tradition, the *Munggahan* tradition according to Islamic law, and the Islamic values encompassed in the *Munggahan* tradition to welcome the holy month of Ramadan in Sundanese culture. The study concludes that the *Munggahan* tradition is ancestral cultural heritage preserved by the Sundanese people to safeguard Sundanese culture, which is part of Indonesia's cultural wealth. In Islamic law, the *Munggahan* tradition is permitted and accepted by the Sundanese community, despite the absence of specific Quranic texts governing this tradition. The *Munggahan* tradition carries numerous wisdom and benefits, embodying Islamic values such as faith, practice, worship, local wisdom, and Islamic brotherhood. This research contributes to our understanding of religious values in the context of Sundanese local culture and emphasizes the importance of preserving Indonesia's cultural heritage based on Islamic teachings.

Keywords: Culture; Islam; *Munggahan*; Ramadan; Sundanese Culture.

Introduction

In the current era, there are many phenomena that have occurred, including in Indonesia, religion and tradition (culture) are something that is difficult to separate, until now the acculturation of these two things always accompanies social life in society (Pongsibanne, 2017). Religion, in this case Islam and tradition in Indonesia, is a difference but has become a unity (Iwan, 2018). Indonesia itself is a multicultural nation and is rich in ethnicity, race, religion, cultural diversity and traditions in it. This diversity has existed for a long time, and has become something that is commonly known by its people, even the whole world. This cultural diversity will always adorn the growth, development and life of the people in Indonesia (Styliste, 2017).

Indonesia itself is a country with the largest Muslim majority community as well as multicultural as evidenced by the existence of various ethnic groups with diverse traditions/cultures, including the Sundanese tribe (Frisca, 2016). The Sundanese tribe is a tribe that lives in West Java, and is the largest population of around ± 15.2%. The Sundanese tribe inhabits many areas of West Java, Jakarta, Banten, Lampung, and the western region of Central Java (Banyumasan). However, the majority are located in West Java province. West Java Province has the largest total population in Indonesia, around ±65% of which are native Sundanese. Sundanese as an Indonesian ethnic group, has special characteristics from other tribes. This Sundanese characteristic is found in its culture, from religiosity, art, customs, and social life (Pongsibanne, 2017).

Today, the majority of Sundanese people are Muslims. When Islam came to the

Sundanese region, the people in general already adhered to the beliefs of their ancestors (Hurgronje, 1931; Sujati, 2019). Islam came in a peaceful way, making its presence accepted. Ultimately, the term "Sunda is Islam, and Islam is Sunda" emerged. The arrival of Islam in Tatar Sunda gave its own distinctiveness to Sundanese culture. So that there is acculturation between Islam and Sundanese culture. This acculturation creates a new culture without causing the loss of the characteristics of each element (Sujati, 2019). The acculturation of Islam and Sundanese culture that integrates with each other has an impact on the Sundanese region which has become a strong Muslim base and dominates the island of Java (Noer, 2000; Sujati, 2019).

The Sundanese are not only Muslims, but there are Catholics, Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, and Sundanese Wiwitan and other beliefs (Pongsibanne, 2017). This makes the Sundanese tribe rich in religious traditions. The Sundanese tribe is a society that continues to preserve its traditions so that until now it has been preserved for generations. Among the traditions that are still preserved is the *Munggahan* tradition which is a tradition of Sundanese people who are Muslims. This *Munggahan* tradition is identical to the month of Ramadan. Various kinds of traditions are held in each region before the holy month of Ramadan.

Based on this, Ramadan is a very important time for adherents, especially those in Indonesia. In order to welcome the month of Ramadan itself is usually so lively with various events and traditions carried out by people in various regions, both cities and villages. So it is a fact that the various celebrations in order to welcome the month of Ramadan are so many and varied. Although there are differences in the celebration, but still remain in the same framework and spirit as a form of gratitude of adherents for the arrival of the awaited month of Ramadan (Styliste, 2017). The coming of the month of Ramadan is a gift from Allah, which makes its people realize to always maintain and strengthen human relations so that they are always well established (Fajar et al., 2018).

In this month of Ramadan, Muslims in every corner have unique and various celebratory traditions in welcoming the presence of Ramadan. In this month of Ramadan, Muslims are required to fast for a month. Therefore, Muslims welcome Ramadan with joy and gratitude because they can still feel and carry out the month that is blessed by Allah SWT (Styliste, 2017). In welcoming it there is usually a few days before Ramadan a tradition is held which is usually called *Munggahan*. *Munggahan* is usually celebrated by gathering and eating together or in Sundanese terms called botram, which is usually together while traveling or gathering at the parents' house (Fajar et al., 2018).

This tradition of welcoming the holy month of Ramadan has a variety of uniqueness in its implementation in each region. In Indonesian society, especially the Sundanese, the *Munggahan* tradition is usually celebrated by gathering family, relatives and friends (Zhafran, 2020). Both in villages and cities, this munggah tradition is still maintained. Especially in Tatar Sunda, West Java, this moment is never missed (Rani, 2010). In the tradition of *Munggahan* welcoming the holy month of Ramadan is usually carried out with joy by Muslim residents. Muslims are certainly very excited and happy when welcoming the holy month of Ramadan, an opportunity that only exists once a year. Because if worship in the month of Ramadan will be given a higher reward than in other months (Zhafran, 2020). In its own implementation, the *Munggahan* tradition is very diverse, such as gathering family and relatives, botram or eating, forgiving each other, praying, pilgrimage, tasyakuran, traveling, or doing *Munggahan* alms (Rahmah, 2014).

The *Munggahan* tradition, which has become an inherent habit in the community, makes the community continue to preserve it. With this *Munggahan* tradition, people can represent their joy in welcoming the month of Ramadan. Therefore, this *Munggahan*

tradition is an activity that will always be carried out when a few days before the month of Ramadan (Nawawi, 2016). As for the social perspective, this *Munggahan* tradition, apart from being a tradition, can also be a social media as an adhesive for relationships between individuals or groups, as well as an effort to create harmony in society. Because in the implementation of this *Munggahan* tradition, there are no boundaries or social classes in society that distinguish them (Nawawi, 2016) (Nawawi, 2016).

The *Munggahan* tradition is a cultural custom of the Sundanese people in West Java in welcoming the month of Ramadan (Sugiyanto & Soedarto, 2016). But unfortunately, in 2020 to 2021 also in the midst of the Covid-19 virus outbreak in Indonesia, this *Munggahan* tradition had to be eliminated (Aminullah, 2020). In West Java, there are many Covid-19 cases that increase every day. So in accordance with the government's recommendation, the activity was eliminated. As an effort to prevent its spread. Although temporarily eliminated, the ban is generally only for events that are celebrated in one place in a crowd. However, the main essence is to always be grateful to Allah Swt. and can still be celebrated with family (Zhafran, 2020).

The results of previous research have contained studies on the *Munggahan* tradition, which are relevant to the study in this article. Thus, the research can be used as reference material in the process of preparing the article. Among others, research from Budi Sujati (2019), with the title "Cultural Traditions of Islamic Communities in Sundanese Tatar (West Java)," published in Ishlah: Journal of Ushuluddin, Adab and Dakwah Studies, Volume 1 Number 1, pages 37-51. This research examines the traditions of Sundanese people who adhere to Islam, which should have an important role in maintaining and preserving their traditions that have been acculturated with Islam. So as to create local traditions based on Islam. Because it is not uncommon that Sundanese people who from the beginning are familiar with the teachings brought by Islam, because the teachings of their ancestors are almost similar. This research uses a qualitative approach. The discussion in this study includes the early history of the entry of Islam in the Sundanese tribe, laws, customs and traditions of the Sundanese tribe. This study concludes that there are so many cultures that are acculturated with Islam, so that one of them makes Sundanese people have a diverse and unique culture in Indonesia, which can even be used as an example for other nations in uniting a difference (Sujati, 2019).

Then research from Muhamad Fajar N, Sulasman, Usman Supendi (2018), entitled "Religious Traditions of the Bandung City Community in the Month of Ramadan 1990-2000," published by Historia Madania, Volume 2 Number 2, pages 75-90. This research examines the traditions of the people in the city of Bandung during the month of Ramadan from 1990-2000. In studying it, a historical approach is used. The results and discussion of this study show that the traditions of the people in the city of Bandung during the month of Ramadan are so lively with various habits in each region that have become a culture in the city of Bandung, one of these traditions is *Munggahan*, ngabuburit and other traditions that have been embedded and passed down to future generations. This research concluded that social religious life in Bandung and urban life in other cities, has multiple social problems in the implementation of a tradition. With this in mind, efforts need to be made to develop supporting facilities that provide comfort for the people of Bandung especially during the month of Ramadan. From this research it is concluded (Fajar et al., 2018).

Research from Nurul Hidayah (2018), with the title "Munggah-Munggah Tradition (Analysis of Community Rituals Before Marriage in Gembol Village, Karanganyar District, Ngawi Regency)," from the Al-Ahwal Al-Syakhshiyyah Department, Faculty of Sharia, Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University Malang. This study discusses the factors and background of the implementation of the *Munggahan* tradition, the

relationship between Islam and culture in the *Munggahan* tradition, and the perspective of Islamic law on the *Munggahan* tradition. The study used field studies, and qualitative methods by conducting interviews, observation, documentation and descriptive analysis in collecting and processing the data. This study concludes that the background of the implementation of this *Munggahan* tradition has become a hereditary custom, ritual, and religious practice. The relationship between Islam and culture in this *Munggahan* tradition always runs harmoniously and complements each other. Then in Islamic law, this tradition can continue to be implemented because this tradition does not violate Islamic provisions (Hidayah, 2018).

Research from Salma Al-Zahra Ramadhani and Nor Mohammad Abdoeh (2020), entitled "Punggahan Tradition Ahead of Ramadan," published by Al-Mada: Journal of Religion, Social and Culture, Volume 3 Number 1 pages 51-65. This research discusses the tradition of punggahan or *Munggahan* when approaching Ramadan. The method used is qualitative with a field study of the punggahan implementation process, the meaning of the punggahan tradition, the Islamic perspective on the punggahan tradition and the benefits of implementing the punggahan tradition. The conclusion of this research is that the punggahan tradition is a place to establish and strengthen community relations when welcoming and entering the month of Ramadan. This punggahan tradition is a tradition that has been passed down from ancestors, so it is not a tradition taught in Islamic law. Nevertheless, this punggahan tradition may be carried out because it contains positive values that are actually recommended by Islam and also does not violate Islamic law (Ramadhani & Abdoeh, 2020).

The previous research is certainly very useful for the preparation of this research. The similarity in this research is that the study contains a discussion of the *Munggahan* tradition. The difference in the discussion is that it describes the perspective of Islamic values contained in the *Munggahan* tradition as a Sundanese culture in welcoming the month of Ramadan.

Based on the explanation above, the research formulation discusses the Islamic value contained in the *Munggahan* tradition to welcome the arrival of the holy month of Ramadan in Sundanese culture. The research questions are, what is the *Munggahan* tradition, how Islam responds to the *Munggahan* tradition, and how the Islamic values contained in the *Munggahan* tradition to welcome the holy month of Ramadan in Sundanese culture. The purpose of this research is to discuss the value of Islam and the *Munggahan* tradition of welcoming the holy month of Ramadan to the wisdom of Sundanese culture as a study of local community studies. This research focuses on the "*Munggahan* Tradition."

Research Methods

The research focuses on the *Munggahan* tradition practiced by the Sundanese community in their daily lives. This study addresses a gap in the existing literature as there are limited discussions on the Sundanese *Munggahan* tradition from both a legal and Islamic values perspective. The researchers take pride in exploring the diversity of traditions and cultures, but they also express concerns about the current limitations imposed on this tradition due to the global pandemic, which led to government regulations prohibiting its practice to prevent gatherings and the spread of the virus.

The chosen research method is qualitative, employing a combination of literature review and field study, complemented by the researcher's personal experiences in everyday life. The sources utilized include books, journals, and online resources. This

method facilitates the exploration of societal phenomena and cultural practices (Ratna, 2010).

The research utilizes descriptive analysis to generate comprehensive and clear data. This analysis is supported by various approaches, methods, and techniques, ensuring a coherent study of cultural traditions, specifically the *Munggahan* tradition (Pals, 2012). Descriptive analysis serves as a data processing process aimed at explaining, describing, and evaluating the obtained data in a detailed and systematic manner concerning the *Munggahan* tradition (Pals, 2012).

Results and Discussion

1. *Munggahan* Tradition

Etymologically, the term "*Munggahan*" is derived from the Sundanese words "munggah" and "unggah," which signify ascending or moving to a higher position (Hikmatiar, 2020). In Sundanese, the word "unggah" means to move or leave from a lower place to a higher place (Chaebar, 2020; Rani, 2010). The word "munggah," as defined in the Sundanese Dictionary, refers to the first day of Ramadan (Chaebar, 2020; Rani, 2010). According to the Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), it refers to a gathering or meal with family and loved ones in preparation for the holy month of Ramadan (Prasatya, 2021).

The term "*Munggahan*" is pronounced as "munggah" in Sundanese due to the prefix "m" (Chaebar, 2020). In the context of fasting, "munggah" means entering the high degree of the month of Ramadan (Chaebar, 2020). The reason behind the name "*Munggahan*" is that individuals who begin the month of fasting express gratitude and seek to draw closer to Allah SWT (Karen, 2020). Thus, it can be concluded that the *Munggahan* tradition is a practice among Muslims in the Sundanese tribe to welcome the month of Ramadan, typically observed on the first day of Ramadan (Rahmah, 2014). *Munggahan* is a long-standing tradition among the Sundanese people.

Philosophically, *Munggahan* used to symbolize the relationship between the hinggil (upper) population and the handap (bottom) population (Hikmatiar, 2020). The hinggil population consists of the first or second generation residing in the ancestral homeland, while the handap population represents the youngest child or sibling living away from the homeland (Ishom, 2019). The hinggil population plays a vital role in preserving the authenticity of ancestral culture and maintaining a close connection with God and the spirits (Ishom, 2019; Hikmatiar, 2020). On the other hand, handap individuals contribute to the economic, social, and political development. They are believed to have limited direct communication with God and the spirits, thus requiring mediation through the hinggil population (Ishom, 2019; Hikmatiar, 2020). The month of Sha'ban, often referred to as "Ruwah" in Sundanese, is considered a sacred time when ancestral spirits gather. During this period, communal prayers are conducted to honor and remember deceased ancestors or family members (Amin et al., 2018). The Sundanese people continue to observe the *Munggahan* tradition as a way to welcome the holy month of Ramadan, which is closely linked to the significance of the month of Sha'ban (Karen, 2020).

2. *Munggahan* Tradition According to Islamic Law

Islam, in its response, accepts local culture as long as it aligns with the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah (Baedhowi, 2008; Kastolani & Yusof, 2016). Tradition refers to the development of habits into customs or religious rituals, and Islamic tradition represents the religious dynamics that regulate Muslims in terms of cultural ethics

(Ramadhani & Abdoeh, 2020). In Islam, tradition is known as "urf."

In the Arabic language, "urf" is derived from the verb عَرَفَ - يَعْرِفُ, and it means الْمَعْرُوفُ, signifying something that is considered good and logical (Khalil, 2009). In the context of "urf," it refers to something that is familiar, habitual, and ingrained in people's lives (Efendi, 2005). According to Abdul Wahab Khalaf, "urf" denotes customs (Khallaf, 1993; Hidayah, 2018; Ramadhani & Abdoeh, 2020).

Urf, the concept of customary practices in Islamic law, can be divided into different categories based on its material, use, and value. In terms of material, there are two types of urf: urf qauli and urf fili. Urf qauli refers to the use of words, expressions, or terms that hold specific meanings. For example, the word "lahmun" specifically denotes meat, indicating land animals. On the other hand, urf fili encompasses customs, actions, and behaviors that have been practiced within a community for generations. An example of urf fili is the act of buying and selling without a contractual formula (sighat), which is considered permissible due to its customary nature and lack of unexpected outcomes.

According to its use, urf can be classified as urf 'am or typical urf. Urf 'am represents common customs that are universally observed across different communities worldwide. For instance, nodding one's head to signify agreement or using the index finger to point at something are examples of urf 'am. Conversely, typical urf refers to customs that are specific to certain groups, associated with a particular time and place. An example of typical urf is the tradition of pulling offspring in Minangkabau culture.

Urf can also be categorized based on its value, distinguishing between sahih urf and fasid urf. Sahih urf refers to traditions that are repeated and widely accepted within society, reflecting good manners, noble culture, and alignment with religious principles. The practice of "halal bihalal" (a gathering for mutual forgiveness) is an example of sahih urf. On the other hand, fasid urf pertains to traditions that contradict religious texts, ethical values, and cause harm. An example of fasid urf is gambling.

In determining the acceptability of urf, certain criteria are considered. Urf should be beneficial and logical, providing practical value to individuals and communities. It should also be universally accepted within the respective community, indicating its widespread recognition. Additionally, the usage of urf should predate the current time and not be an innovation introduced later. Most importantly, urf should not contradict Islamic Shariah, ensuring its compliance with the principles and teachings of Islam (Hidayah, 2018).

Based on the explanation of urf above, the *Munggahan* tradition can be identified as an instance of urf fili in terms of material. In terms of use, the *Munggahan* tradition falls under the category of typical urf. Based on assessment, the *Munggahan* tradition is considered sahih urf. Scholars have stated that if a tradition does not violate religious rules (shariah), it is not considered an innovation (bid'ah) (Iwan, 2018). Hence, the *Munggahan* tradition is permissible.

Although there is no specific Islamic Shari'ah ruling or precedent set by the Messenger of Allah (saw) regarding the *Munggahan* tradition, it is widely accepted among the community, particularly the Sundanese tribe. It is a customary practice that does not involve shirk (associating partners with Allah) or contradict Islamic law, while also embodying positive values (Rani, 2010). Therefore, the *Munggahan* tradition upholds religious teachings while preserving the cultural richness that is part of Indonesia's cultural heritage.

3. Islamic Value in *Munggahan* Tradition

a) *Munggahan* Tradition to Welcome the Holy Month of Ramadan

The holy month of Ramadan is approaching, and it holds a special place in the hearts of Muslims. Fasting during Ramadan is an obligatory act of worship for all Muslims, as ordained by Allah SWT (Zhafran, 2020). The command to fast was revealed after the migration of Muslims from Mecca to Medina, in the second year of Hijri (Monitor, 2016). The obligation to fast in the month of Ramadan is stated in Surah al-Baqarah, verse 183, and it is to be observed by all Muslims for the entire month, in accordance with Islamic law (Monitor, 2016). Fasting in Ramadan is considered one of the fundamental pillars of Islam and lasts from dawn until sunset, with certain exceptions for those with valid excuses (such as menstruation, postpartum period, or illness) (Monitor, 2016). Additionally, the month of Ramadan is significant as it marks the revelation of the Qur'an.

The arrival of Ramadan is eagerly awaited and celebrated with various traditions that aim to enhance the spirituality and worship values during this blessed month. One such tradition is the *Munggahan* tradition (Sugiyanto & Soedarto, 2016). Derived from the month of Sha'ban, which precedes Ramadan, *Munggahan* signifies the transition to the esteemed and noble month of Ramadan (Yulianti, 2019). The *Munggahan* tradition serves as an expression of gratitude to Allah SWT for the opportunity to observe fasting and cleanse oneself from impurities, with the hope of attaining spiritual purity and avoiding sinful actions. Typically, *Munggahan* is observed one or two days before the start of Ramadan (Yulianti, 2019).

While the *Munggahan* tradition is commonly associated with the Sundanese community, it can be regarded as part of Indonesian culture with lessons that can be learned and appreciated by all. The implementation of *Munggahan* may vary across different regions, but the core elements remain consistent, including family gatherings, communal meals (botram), forgiveness, collective prayers, pilgrimages, travel, and charitable acts (Rahmah, 2014). Despite the variations, the essence of the tradition lies in family togetherness, maintaining connections, engaging in prayer, and sharing pre-dawn meals (sahur) (Karen, 2020).

The significance and purpose of the *Munggahan* tradition extend beyond personal purification. It serves as a means to promote tolerance, mutual respect, and harmony among people (Karen, 2020). By purifying oneself and engaging in acts of forgiveness, individuals can enter the holy month of Ramadan with a clean heart, as emphasized in Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 222, which speaks about repentance and purification. The *Munggahan* tradition, while not a religious obligation, carries numerous benefits, such as strengthening relationships, fostering forgiveness, and reaping the rewards of spiritual growth (Ramadhani & Abdoeh, 2020). This tradition aligns with Islamic teachings and offers valuable lessons for life. It provides an opportune moment for reconciliation and mutual forgiveness (Chaebar, 2020), underscoring the importance of preserving and nurturing friendships.

b) Islamic Value in *Munggahan* Tradition

The value of faith

The value of faith holds a significant place in the *Munggahan* tradition as it emphasizes the belief and unwavering trust in Allah SWT as the ultimate source of help and guidance. This value is derived from the teachings of the Quran, specifically mentioned in Surah Al-Fatihah, verse 5, which states, “You alone we worship, and You alone we ask for help.”

Faith serves as the foundation for the *Munggahan* tradition, instilling in individuals the understanding that their reliance should be solely on Allah SWT. It encourages them to seek His assistance, guidance, and blessings throughout the month of Ramadan and beyond. By having strong faith, individuals are reminded of the divine presence and their responsibilities as Muslims.

In the context of the *Munggahan* tradition, faith manifests in various ways. Firstly, it influences the mindset of individuals, fostering a deep sense of gratitude towards Allah SWT for allowing them to witness the arrival of the holy month of Ramadan. This gratitude is expressed through the *Munggahan* tradition as a means of thanking Allah for the opportunity to fast and purify oneself.

Additionally, faith influences the manner in which individuals approach their worship and acts of devotion during Ramadan. It encourages them to perform their religious obligations with sincerity, seeking to please Allah SWT and gain His blessings. The *Munggahan* tradition becomes an embodiment of this faith, as individuals come together to engage in communal prayers, recitation of the Quran, and other acts of worship.

Moreover, faith in the *Munggahan* tradition reinforces the belief in the power of supplication. It encourages individuals to turn to Allah SWT for forgiveness, guidance, and support, recognizing that He is the ultimate source of solace and assistance. This aspect of faith is particularly evident during the *Munggahan* gathering, where individuals engage in heartfelt prayers, seeking Allah's mercy and forgiveness.

The value of practice

The *Munggahan* tradition encompasses the value of practice, particularly through the act of almsgiving. Almsgiving, or giving in charity, holds great virtues and is considered an essential practice in Islam. This value is emphasized through the teachings of the Quran, including the verse in Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 261, which highlights the virtues of giving in charity.

Almsgiving in the *Munggahan* tradition is an act of generosity and kindness towards others, especially those in need. It reflects the spirit of compassion, empathy, and selflessness. By giving to others, individuals demonstrate their commitment to fulfilling their social and religious obligations.

Through the act of almsgiving in the *Munggahan* tradition, individuals are encouraged to share their blessings and contribute to the betterment of society. This act benefits not only the recipients but also holds numerous spiritual benefits for the giver. It allows individuals to purify their wealth, seek closeness to Allah SWT, and experience spiritual growth.

The value of practice in the *Munggahan* tradition goes beyond material giving. It encompasses acts of kindness, generosity, and service to others. This includes offering assistance, supporting charitable causes, and engaging in acts of goodwill towards fellow human beings. These practices foster a sense of community, unity, and empathy, creating a positive social impact.

Furthermore, the value of practice in the *Munggahan* tradition serves as a reminder of the importance of active engagement in acts of worship and righteous deeds. It encourages individuals to go beyond the basic obligations of Ramadan fasting and engage in additional acts of goodness. This may involve voluntary prayers, recitation of the Quran, seeking knowledge, and engaging in acts of service to others.

Value of worship

The *Munggahan* tradition places great importance on the value of worship,

specifically through the acts of prayer and recitation of the Quran. These acts of worship are integral to the practice of Islam and hold significant spiritual significance for Muslims.

Prayer, or salah, is a fundamental pillar of Islam and serves as a direct means of communication between the individual and Allah SWT. It is a time of reflection, submission, and seeking closeness to the Creator. In the *Munggahan* tradition, individuals are encouraged to engage in regular prayers as a way to strengthen their connection with Allah SWT. The importance of prayer is highlighted in Surah Al-Mu'min, verse 60, where Allah SWT commands believers to establish prayer and seek His assistance through patience and prayer.

In addition to prayer, the *Munggahan* tradition also emphasizes the value of reciting the Quran. The Quran is considered the word of Allah SWT and holds immense guidance, wisdom, and spiritual nourishment. Muslims are encouraged to engage in the regular recitation of the Quran, seeking knowledge, and contemplating its teachings. This act of recitation allows individuals to deepen their understanding of Islam, strengthen their faith, and find solace and guidance in the words of Allah SWT. The importance of reciting the Quran is highlighted in Surah Al-Muzzammil, verses 1-4, where believers are urged to dedicate a portion of the night for prayer and recitation of the Quran.

Through the value of worship in the *Munggahan* tradition, individuals are reminded of the significance of engaging in acts of devotion and seeking spiritual growth. Prayer and recitation of the Quran serve as a means of connecting with Allah SWT, seeking His guidance, and purifying the heart and soul. These acts of worship instill discipline, mindfulness, and a sense of awe and reverence for the divine. By incorporating these practices into the *Munggahan* tradition, individuals are encouraged to deepen their faith, strengthen their relationship with Allah SWT, and strive towards spiritual excellence.

Local wisdom value

The *Munggahan* tradition encompasses the value of local wisdom, which emphasizes mutual cooperation and the preservation of existing traditions that align with Islamic teachings. This value reflects the recognition and appreciation of cultural heritage within the context of Islam.

Mutual cooperation is a core aspect of local wisdom embedded in the *Munggahan* tradition. It emphasizes the importance of working together, supporting one another, and fostering a sense of community. This value encourages individuals to extend a helping hand to their fellow community members, promoting unity and solidarity. By engaging in mutual cooperation, people strengthen social bonds, create a supportive environment, and contribute to the well-being of the community as a whole.

Furthermore, the *Munggahan* tradition highlights the significance of preserving existing traditions that are in harmony with Islamic teachings. This value emphasizes the importance of maintaining cultural practices and customs that do not contradict the principles of Islam. It acknowledges the diversity of local traditions and seeks to preserve and celebrate them while upholding Islamic values. This integration of local wisdom and Islamic teachings promotes cultural identity, fosters a sense of belonging, and allows individuals to express their faith within the framework of their cultural heritage.

The value of local wisdom in the *Munggahan* tradition finds its foundation in Surah Al-Maidah, verse 2, where Allah SWT emphasizes the importance of upholding commitments and agreements. It encourages individuals to honor and respect local customs and traditions that are consistent with Islamic principles. This verse serves as a guide for the integration of local wisdom into religious practices, fostering a harmonious balance between cultural heritage and Islamic values.

The value of ukuwah islamiyah

The *Munggahan* tradition highlights the value of "ukhuwah islamiyah," which emphasizes the importance of Islamic brotherhood and sisterhood. It underscores the significance of maintaining kinship, togetherness, unity, and mutual respect within the community. This value plays a crucial role in creating a safe, harmonious, and peaceful environment for individuals to thrive.

One example of ukhuwah islamiyah within the *Munggahan* tradition is the practice of "silaturahmi." Silaturahmi refers to maintaining and strengthening family ties, friendships, and relationships. It involves regular visits, communication, and the exchange of warm greetings and well-wishes. Silaturahmi fosters a sense of connectedness and belonging, promoting strong bonds between individuals and families. This practice is deeply rooted in Islamic teachings and encourages the building of positive and supportive relationships within the community.

The Quran provides evidence that emphasizes the importance of ukhuwah islamiyah. In Surah Al-Hujurat, verse 10, Allah SWT emphasizes the significance of avoiding suspicion, backbiting, and negative assumptions about others. This verse highlights the importance of fostering trust, understanding, and goodwill among community members. Similarly, in Surah An-Nisa, verse 36, Allah SWT emphasizes the value of maintaining good relationships with relatives and treating them with kindness and fairness. These verses serve as reminders of the importance of ukhuwah islamiyah and the positive impact it has on individuals and society.

Conclusion

This study reveals Islamic values in the Sundanese *Munggahan* tradition as part of welcoming the holy month of Ramadan. Although it has no textual basis in the Qur'an, the *Munggahan* tradition does not contradict the principles of sharia and is widely accepted by the Sundanese community. This tradition maintains Indonesia's cultural heritage and traditional wealth, and conveys religious messages such as belief, practice, worship, local wisdom, and ukhuwah Islamiyah. In the context of cultural diversity in Indonesia, this research provides an important contribution and is expected to strengthen the understanding and preservation of the Sundanese *Munggahan* tradition, as an inseparable cultural identity.

This research also has the potential to contribute to the academic and scientific fields, as well as increase appreciation for cultural diversity in Indonesia. It is hoped that this research will encourage wider awareness of the importance of maintaining cultural heritage and religious values in the Sundanese *Munggahan* tradition. The researcher recognizes the limitations of this study and is open to suggestions and criticism for future improvements.

References

Amin, K., Yusqi, I., Suwendi, & Masykhur, A. (2018). *Ensikolpedia Islam Nusantara* (Edisi Buda). Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan ISlam Kementrian Agama RI. http://pendis.kemenag.go.id/diktis.kemenag.go.id

Aminullah, A. (2020). *Demi Keselamatan Bersama, Tradisi Munggahan Jelang Ramadhan Ditiadakan*. Kompas.Com. https://www.google.com/amp/s/amp.kompas.com/regional/read/2020/04/20/05300001/demi-keselamatan-bersama-tradisi-*Munggahan*-jelang-ramadhan-ditiadakan

Baedhowi. (2008). *Kearifan Lokal Kosmologi Kejawen dalam Agama dan Kearifan*

dalam Tantangan Global (Cetakan 1). Pustaka Pelajar. http://opac.fah.uin-alauddin.ac.id/index.php?p=show_detail&id=1134&keywords=

Chaebar, H. (2020). *Munggahan*. Tribunnewswiki.Com. www.google.com/amp/s/www.tribunnewswiki.com/amp/2020/04/22/*Munggahan*

Efendi, S. (2005). *Ushul Fiqh*. Kencana. http://library.um.ac.id/free-contents/index.php/buku/detail/ushul-fiqh-satria-effendi-m-zein-editor-amminuddin-yaqub-m-nurul-irvan-azharuddin-latif-34268.html

Fajar, M., Sulasman, & Supendi, U. (2018). Tradisi Keagamaan Masyarakat Kota Bandung di Bulan Ramadhan Tahun 1990-2000. *Historia Madania*, *2*(2), 75–90.

Frisca, F. (2016). *Munggahan, Tradisi Suku Sunda untuk Sambut Ramadhan*. Famela. m.famela.com/lifestyle-relationship/read/2426115/*Munggahan*-tradisi-suku-sunda-untuk-sambut-ramadan

Hidayah, N. (2018). *Tradisi Munggah-Munggah (Analisis Terhadap Ritual Masyarakat Sebelum Perkawinan di Desa Gembol, Kecamatan Karanganyar, Kabupaten Ngawi)*. Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang.

Hikmatiar, T. R. (2020). *Tradisi Munggahan: Tradisi Sunda Jelang Ramadhan yang Bikin Perut Kembung*. Terminal Mojok.Co. https://mojok.co/termina/tradisi-*Munggahan*-tradisi-sunda-jelang-ramadan-yang -bikin-perut-kembung/

Hurgronje, C. S. (1931). *Mekka in the Latter Part of the 19th Century*. Luzac & Co.

Indozone.id. (2020). *Mengenal Sejarah Puasa Ramadhan Menurut al-Qur'an dan Hadits*. Indo Zone. /https://www.indozone.id/life/9DsmDg/sejarah-puasa-ramadan-menurut-alquran-dan-hadits/read-all

Ishom, M. (2019). *Jelang Ramadan: Tradisi Munggahan dalam Masyarakat Sunda*. 3–5. https://alif.id

Iwan. (2018). *Tradisi Munggahan Kearifan Lokal yang Sudah Turun Temurun*. Asahan Satu. www.google.com/amp/s/www.asahansatu.co.id/tradisi-*Munggahan*-kearifan-lokal-yang-sudah-turun-temurun/%253Famp_markup=1

Karen, A. (2020). *Tradisi Munggahan dalam Masyarakat SUnda Sambut Bulan Ramadhan*. Nusantara News. https://nusantaranews.co/tradisi-*Munggahan*-dalam-masyarakat-sunda-sambut-bulan-ramadhan/

Kastolani, & Yusof, A. (2016). Relasi Islam dan Budaya Lokal: Studi Tentang Tradisi Nyadran di Desa Sumogawe Kecamatan Getasan Kabupaten Semarang. *Kontemplasi*, *4*(1). http://ejournal.iain-tulungagung.ac.id/index.php/kon/article/view/130

Khalil, R. H. (2009). *Tarikh Tasyri: Sejarah Legislasi Hukum Islam* (Cetakan 1). Amzah. https://onesearch.id/Record/IOS6.INLIS00000000023400

Khallaf, A. W. (1993). *Ilmu Ushul Fiqh Kaidah Hukum Islam*. PT. Raja Grafindo Persada. http://opac.fitk.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php?p=show_detail&id=22261&keywords=

Monitor, A. (2016). *Sejarah Puasa di Bulan Ramadhan*. Aceh Monitor. https://acehnonitor.com/sejarah-puasa-di-bulan-ramadhan/

Nawawi. (2016). Tradisi Unggahan Sebagai Transformasi Agama, Sosial, dan Budaya. *Jurnal Perbandingan Agama*, *17*(2), 153–173.

Noer, D. (2000). *The Modernist Muslim in Indonesia: 1900-1942*. Oxford University Press.

Pals, D. L. (2012). *Tujuh Teori dari Agama*. Ircisod.

Pongsibanne, L. K. (2017). *Islam dan Budaya Lokal: Kajian Antropologi Agama*. Kaukaba Dipantara.

Prasatya, S. T. (2021). *Munggahan dan Botram, Tradisi Masyarakat Sunda Menjelang dan Saar Ramadhan*. Humas Kota Bandung: Jendela Informasi Kota Bandung. https://humas.bandung.go.id/layanan/*Munggahan*-dan-botram-tradisi-masyarakat-sunda-menj

Rahmah, S. (2014). *Makna Ritual Munggahan Bulan Ramadhan (Studi Kasus di Masyarakat Kampung Cipinang RT. 03 RW. 02 Desa Gandasari Kecamatan Katapang Kabupaten Bandung Jawa Barat)* [Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung]. https://id.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/*Munggahan*

Ramadhani, S. A.-Z., & Abdoeh, N. M. (2020). Tradisi Punggahan Menjelang Ramadhan. *Al-Mada: Jurnal Agama, Sosial Dan Budaya*, *1*(1), 51–65. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.31538/almada.v3i1.495

Rani. (2010). *Menyambut Ramadhan dengan Tradsi Munggahan*. Blog.UGM.Ac.Id Catatan Sehari-Hari Warga UGM. http://blog.ugm.ac.id/2010/11/04/menyambut-ramadhan-dengan-tradisi-*Munggahan*/

Ratna, N. K. (2010). *Metodologi Penelitian Kajian Budaya dan Ilmu Sosial Humaniora Pada Umumnya*. Pustaka Pelajar.

Styliste. (2017). Ramadhan Ceria. *BCL and D*.

Sugiyanto, & Soedarto. (2016). *Munggahan* Menyambut Datangnya Bulan Ramadhan di Pusat Pengembangan SDM Aparatur Perbuhungan. *Aparatur: Buletin Pusbang SDM Aparatur Perhubungan Edisi 2*, 3. http://ppsdma.bpsdm.dephub.go.id

Sujati, B. (2019). Tradisi Budaya Masyarakat Islam di Tatar Sunda (Jawa Barat). *Ishlah: Journal of Ushuluddin, Adab and Dakwah Studies*, *1*(1), 37–51. http://journal.iain-kerinci.id/index.php/JIS

Syarifuddin, A. (2011). *Ushul Fiqh*. Kencana. http://inlislite.dispusip.jakarta.go.id/jaktim/opac/detail-opac?id=7067

Tafsirweb. (n.d.). *Quran Surat Al-Baqarah Ayat 185*. Tafsirweb. Retrieved January 25, 2021, from https://tafsirweb.com/691-quran-surat-al-baqarah-ayat-185.html

Yulianti. (2019). *Tradisi Munggahan Menjelang Puasa*. M.Ayobandung.Com. www.google.com/amp/s/amp/ayobandung.com/read/2019/05/05/51510/tradisi-*Munggahan*-menjelang-puasa

Zhafran, M. H. (2020). *Tradisi Masyarakat Suku Sunda, Munggahan*. Kompasiana.Com. https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.kompasiana.com/amp/mharitszhafran/5eb7eca2d541df30427ccaa3/tradisi-masyarakat-suku-sunda-*Munggahan*

© 2023 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).